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OR,
The Sea Rover's Ruse.

A Romance of Sea and Shore in 1812.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "BUTTERFLY BILLY," "THE ROYAL
MIDDY," "MERLE THE MIDDY," "THE
SHADOW SHIP," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.
THE ELOPEMENT.

"I HAVE come for my answer, Celine."
The one to whom the words were addressed
started and uttered a slight cry, for she had
heard no one approach the spot where she stood,
and had supposed herself to be alone.
She stood in a rustic arbor overlooking the

ON HER COURSE HELD THE LITTLE LIFE-BOAT, AWAY FROM THE PIRATE SCHOONER—
THE BRAVE BOY MIDDY AT THE TILLER.

Atlantic Ocean, but with a small sheet of water between, known as the Sound, formed by a long sand island, the dunes here and there rising to considerable height.

There were several inlets through this island, or sand reef, through which vessels of twelve feet draught could pass, and the shore of the mainland was beautiful in the extreme, rising from forty to fifty feet in height, and with heavy forests edging the coast for miles in each direction.

Back among the pines and magnolias, for the scene was in the sunny land of the South, stood a white villa, a walk of sunny shells leading to the rustic arbor wherein stood the one who had been addressed as Celine.

It was moonlight, a perfect, balmy, brilliant night, the air laden with the perfume of flowers, and in the cedars two mocking-birds were trilling forth notes of gladness in a sweet duet.

The one who stood in the arbor had glided along the shell walk like a ghost, for she was dressed in white, and had been looking out over the waters, watching the moonlight glimmering upon a distant sail out upon the ocean.

So intently had she been gazing at the distant craft that she had failed to see that a vessel lay at anchor close inshore, in the Sound, half a mile below the plantation villa.

Nor had she seen a boat with muffled oars coming along under the shadow of the shore, which, making a landing near the arbor, a tall form sprung out and advanced by a sheltered path toward her.

When he addressed her as above, he stood in the shadow, his arms crossed upon his breast, and attentively regarding her.

He was clad in uniform, a sword hung by his side, a cloak fell from his broad shoulders, and a plumed hat shaded a face which the moonlight revealed as darkly-bronzed, handsome and daring.

At his words Celine sprung toward him, and in an instant was drawn to his heart.

"This is my answer, then, sweet girl?" he said, in a low tone.

But she could not answer for sobbing, and for some time she was unable to utter a word.

Then she drew herself from his embrace and said, with touching sadness:

"Oh, Bernard! Bernard! we must part this very night."

"Ha! say you so, Celine Chetwyn?"

"It must be, Captain Basil."

"I see, you have been listening to the lies of my rivals against me."

"They have told you that I am a pirate, that the nation I serve is but a land of bandits and buccaneers, and so you turn against me, Celine?"

He spoke bitterly, and quickly she said:

"No, no, Bernard, I have not turned against you; but my father has told me that the Colombian cruisers are no more than buccaneer craft, and that you are lawless in your sea roving, and I must give you up."

"He is thankful to you indeed for having saved us, as you did that day, when our little yacht was chased by a pirate, but he says that you have deceived him as to who you really are, and have won my love intending to make me the bride of a buccaneer."

"So, Bernard, he has asked me to see you no more, and they have organized a company to seize your vessel when next you came into the Sound."

"Father asked me when you were to come, and I told him two weeks later than the day you set; then I came to warn you, and was wondering if yonder vessel was yours, when suddenly you appeared before me."

"Oh Bernard! is it true that you are a pirate?"

The young sailor had listened to her words in silence, and now, when she asked the question, he laughed outright.

"True! Why, my sweet girl, they have told you the veriest lies ever placed upon the head of a poor fellow."

"I am a sailor of fortune, yes, an American who found service under the flag of Cartagena, and my cruiser fights the battles of my adopted land."

"Come with me, Celine; become my wife. I have a priest on board of my vessel who will unite us, and when I have proven how false are the accusations against me, then we will return here to your beautiful home of Sea Vale, and will be welcomed back with open arms."

"Come, Celine, and be the bride of the Sailor of Fortune—the wife of a Sea Patriot."

He spoke earnestly and with a tenderness she could not resist, for she loved him.

Her nature was one to love, and a daughter of

the South her whole heart and soul went with her love.

"Bernard, I will go with you, and then it rests with you to come back and prove your innocence, to win forgiveness of my old father for my leaving him this night."

"Wait for me, for I shall soon return."

"Dare I trust you, Celine?"

"Ah! Bernard, think how deep my trust is in you—I will return within half an hour."

She glided away and he watched her as she walked briskly up the shell walk, and saw her ascend to the piazza and disappear within the brightly-lighted hall.

He waited, pacing to and fro for an hour, and then, as he saw by his jeweled watch that the time was gone in which she had promised to return, he muttered an oath, and stamped with impatience.

But a few moments after she appeared, bearing a heavy bundle with her, enveloped in a shawl, and he gave a low whistle which called to him a man from his boat.

The sailor shouldered the bundle and the two led the way to the boat, entered it, and were rowed swiftly along in the shadows of the dark shore to where an armed schooner lay at anchor.

"Bernard, it will almost break my poor old father's heart what I do this night, and will it break mine, too, I wonder?" murmured the young girl, as the boat neared the schooner.

He glanced at her quickly, for her words seemed prophetic, but said tenderly:

"Your heart will never be broken while it is in my keeping, Celine."

A moment more and the boat touched the schooner, which at once got under way and stood seaward, while in the luxuriously-furnished cabin sat Celine Chetwyn, who was to learn ere long just how sad the mistake she had made.

CHAPTER II.

THE MIDNIGHT COMBAT.

Two vessels are flying over the sea on which the darkness of night has fallen, a night threatening to break in storm, for black clouds obscure the sky, and hide the stars.

The wind is blowing fresh and steadily increasing, whistling ominously in the rigging of the two vessels, and causing them to heel well over under its pressure, for they are both carrying clouds of canvas.

From the bows of the vessel, pursuing bursts red flames now and then and an iron shot is sent after the craft ahead, struggling to escape from a dreaded foe.

The leading craft is a small brig, trim-looking, though as she flies from a schooner about her own size, it would indicate that she was unarmed and a merchantman, perhaps richly laden.

The pursuer is a well-armed schooner, and upon her decks are many men, while, as the binnacle light now and then reflects upon the colors at the peak, the black flag of the pirate is revealed with its hideous emblem of death in the center, the skull and cross-bones.

Upon the quarter-deck, regarding the flying brig through his glass, stood the buccaneer commander, tall, and gorgeously attired.

"We will catch her within the hour, and I think she is a West Indian, trading with the United States, so doubtless has a rich cargo, and a number of passengers on board."

"You say that you saw a cannon on her deck, Waldo?"

"Yes, Captain Basil, and yet it can only be a twelve-pounder such as some of these traders carry."

"Well, if she fires on us, I will board with my whole crew and cut down without mercy every man on board," and with this terrible threat the pirate chief turned and descended to the cabin.

The scene that met his gaze was a strange one for a pirate vessel.

The cabin was large, was furnished with extravagant luxury, and, brilliantly lighted, seemed like the palatial quarters of a king.

Half-reclining upon a divan was a woman, with raven-hued hair and large, dark, lustrous eyes of wonderful beauty and power.

Her face was strangely lovely and her form exquisitely beautiful, and though seen only in the moonlight that night, as she stood in the rustic arbor at her plantation home, she is readily recognized as Celine Chetwyn, who had cast her lot with a man who, she found but too soon, was all that had been said of him—a pirate—a sea rover—a freelance of fortune.

Years had passed since that night, and she still remained the wife of the buccaneer.

Now, as she reclined there in her sea home,

her face was tinged with deepest sadness, and tears seemed ready to fall from her eyes.

They were not tears of fear, for she cared not for the booming guns, and the tread of combatants upon the schooner's deck; she was well used to that; but her soulful eyes were fixed upon two forms near her own.

One was the form of a youth of ten years, with a bright, handsome, manly face, and his boyish form clad in the uniform of a midddy, a pirate midshipman as it were.

Upon a cushion by the divan sat a tiny little fairy of four years, with golden-brown curls and eyes of deepest blue.

She, too, was dressed in a neat little sailor suit, and did not even shrink at the deep roar of the bow guns, while the boy said:

"The brig holds on well, mother, but we will catch her before the storm breaks."

"Yes, catch her, and then will follow another scene of carnage, and the lockers will be replenished with more blood-stained treasure—Ah!"

As she uttered the exclamation, the buccaneer captain entered the cabin.

"A pretty family picture, surely, and one I regret to break up, but you are needed on deck, sir, and it is time for you, little chit, to be in bed," and he referred to the boy and girl, while his manner, though not unkind, was sneering.

The boy arose and said promptly:

"I go at once, father. Good-night, mother," and with a salute to the one and a kiss for the other, the little midddy left the cabin.

The little girl, meanwhile, had kissed her mother and slipped away to one of the state-rooms, as though afraid of her stern father, and the pirate and his wife were left alone.

"I suppose you have been preaching to the two children, as is your habit, Celine, how terrible is the life I lead, and that to capture the brig I am now chasing means more bloodshed and death?"

"Yes, I did say something of the kind, Bernard, and I cannot help it, for I do not wish them to believe that crime is right and that your life is blameless."

"Well, I have warned you, and you have paid no heed, so I tell you now that you shall give those children up, as nowadays you always have the blues and do nothing but weep and sigh."

"No! no! no! Bernard! You will not do this cruel wrong—you will not take them from me, my husband!"

"Husband? Bah! You are no wife of mine, Celine, for the man who performed the ceremony the night you fled from home with me, was one of my own crew, robed as a priest—Ha! the brig is firing upon us, and I must to the deck."

He sprung up the companionway, unheeding her heavy fall, and running over the young midddy who was coming to call him, and who overheard his fearful words to the poor woman.

While the boy ran to his mother, who lay in a swoon, the pirate chief reached the deck and found that the brig was firing from two small howitzers mounted upon her stern.

She had taken in sail, however, as though feeling that she was carrying too much in the freshening breeze, and the schooner, still holding on to her canvas, had gained rapidly.

The fire of the two howitzers was well aimed and did considerable damage among the pirate crew, which caused the chief to cry out:

"Boarders, ahoy! I will carry her by boarding, and, mind you, show no mercy!"

Then turning to his lieutenant he continued:

"They have, with their passengers, a score and a half of men on board, but we will soon finish them."

"Yes, sir, they were mad to resist. Shall we go to leeward, sir?"

"Yes, and I will be ready to board. You are to follow with a reserve, for we may need them."

With this the chief went forward, and, ten minutes after, the sharp bows of the schooner ran close to leeward of the brig, the grapnels were thrown, and, rough though the sea was, Basil the Buccaneer led his crew upon the decks of the chase.

But, their wild yells were answered by cheers, and the rattle of firearms, while a voice shouted:

"Now, Yankee tars, we have them in our trap! Up and at them!"

"My God! the brig is an armed cruiser!"

"To your schooner, buccaneers!" yelled Basil, and he turned to fly.

But, as he did so, the storm swept down upon the sea; the shock tore the two vessels apart, and in an instant all was darkness, and a chaos of howling winds and driving waters, while

the pirate schooner, almost crewless, went driving away before the gale, threatening to run under with the tremendous pressure of canvas she carried.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOOMED THREE.

In the darkness and the storm the schooner drove wildly on before the wind, heeling far over, plunging, staggering and threatening to pitch her sticks out of her.

Not over a dozen men were upon her decks, for four-fifths of the crew had followed their chief upon the deck of the brig, and those who had remained seemed paralyzed with amazement and terror combined.

They stood about, unable to act, for not an officer was upon deck, and they did not appear capable of thinking for themselves.

As the schooner gave a wilder lurch than ever, the young midshipman bounded from the cabin.

"What does this mean?" he asked.

"The brig proved to be a cruiser, sir, and so when the storm broke our grappels loose from her, the chief and the boarders were all left on board," said one of two men at the wheel.

"Then let us not drive to destruction, so shorten sail."

"All hands ahoy, to take in sail!" and the shrill voice of the Buccaneer Midshipman was heard all over the deck, and recalled the men to a sense of their great danger, for they sprung to obey the command of their little commander with a will.

The topsails were lowered at once, and the mainsail reefed close, while the foresail was furled, and the jib and flying jib taken in.

This left the schooner under fore-staysail and reefed-down mainsail, and as the wind increased in fury, it was found to be all she could carry.

"Where is the brig?" asked the Boy Midshipman, as the men completed their task, and seemed to look to him for further orders, for Captain Basil had made his son a midshipman six months before, and had seen that he had the respect of an officer, while the men had all taken a great fancy to the lad, and discovered in him a sailor of no ordinary caliber, young as he was.

"She was lost in the darkness from us, sir," answered the man addressed.

"Very well; we cannot rescue the crew, so will drive on as we are until evening."

"Bowles, you take the deck, for I have to go below to my mother, who is ill," and the boy left the deck.

The woman lay upon the divan, her little girl seated by her side, and she asked quickly, as her son entered:

"What has happened on deck, my son?"

"Mother, the chief boarded the brig with all but a dozen of the men; grappels were thrown, and just then they found that the chase had played a deep game, pretending to be a merchantman when she was a vessel-of-war."

"The storm swept down just then, sundered the irons, and we drove off before the gale; but I have shortened sail, and we are scudding before the tempest."

"You are ever wise, my brave boy; but, do you mean that the chief was captured?" eagerly asked the woman.

"Yes; he and nearly all the crew were left on board the brig, and if they do not take her, then they will be forced to surrender."

"And that means that they will be hanged?"

"Yes, mother."

"Thank God!" and the words broke like a heartfelt prayer from the woman's lips, while, as though feeling that she had said too much, she asked quickly:

"How many men are left on the schooner?"

"Just eleven, mother."

"Any officer?"

"No, mother."

"My son?"

"Yes, mother."

"Remain on deck and find the number of the men, for there are treasures equaling a king's fortune on this schooner. We must not be found by the brig, but go our way, and, mayhap, the men will give us no trouble. To-morrow we will talk with them as to our future, and theirs."

The lad went on deck, and if deeply impressed with the loss of his father and chief, did not know it.

The men were at their posts, ready to do their duty, for the storm was at its height, and they fully realized their danger.

Bowles was on duty, yet seemed glad to have the boy officer with him, for the night was black, and the sea in a very ugly humor, as huge waves followed the flying schooner, and threatened to roll over her stern every minute.

Two men were at the wheel. They were the best helmsmen on the vessel.

Toward dawn the wind began to lull, but it kept blowing fresh all during the morning.

Not a vessel was in sight, so they had nothing to fear from the brig, which was a relief, as a number of those on board had believed that they would find the cruiser pursuing when the dawn came.

In the afternoon the wind lulled rapidly, the sea went down, until at sunset not a breath of air was felt, and the schooner rolled lazily on the swell.

With no immediate danger of the elements, the crew began to get into an ugly mood.

They openly said that the treasure in the schooner was theirs, and at supper Bowles appeared with a number of bottles of brandy, taken from the wine-room.

As there was now a dead calm, nothing was to be done, so the men went below, to a man, to make a night of it, to indulge in a carousal.

More liquor was brought, and then the loosened tongues began to wag.

It was just midnight when the Boy Midshipman entered the cabin.

His face was pale, but he was perfectly calm, and said:

"Mother, I have been listening, and the men have formed a plot to kill us to-morrow and take the treasure."

"Bowles begged for us, but they said a woman and a boy would not keep a secret, and so we two must die."

"And in their drunken fury they will keep their word, my son. We two are doomed, for we are at their mercy."

"Mother!"

"Yes, my son."

"The men are all in the steerage, and there is no communication fore or aft, and together you and I can slide the hatch over the hatchway, and they are our prisoners."

"You brave, noble boy, we can indeed, and thus hold them prisoners, while we can drift about in the schooner until picked up by some passing vessel."

"Yes, mother, and we will do it! Come with me, and let us at once carry out our plot, for the men are very drunk now, and some of them might come on deck."

"I am ready, my son, as soon as I have armed myself, and woe be to the man who forces me to use them."

Then the two, the woman and the lad, both fully armed, ascended to the deck, slipped forward noiselessly, seized the heavy hatch, and, in a moment more the drunken crew beneath were firmly secured in the steerage.

As the hatch closed in over them, one saw the boy's face, realized that he had heard all, and his bold game to thwart them, and he sprung to his feet with a cry of alarm.

But he was too late, for he and his companions were the prisoners of the little Midshipman Buccaneer.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WRECK.

THE situation was a most critical one, and the poor woman, alone with two children on the deck of the schooner, with a dozen maddened men below, felt it in all the horror that could come upon her.

But, what could be done? The men had determined to end the lives of herself and children, and it was but just to protect her own, so she had yielded to the suggestion of her brave little boy and had imprisoned the drunken pirates in the steerage.

The lad took the situation with almost reckless indifference, and seemed proud of the feat of imprisoning the buccaneer crew, while he did not also forget the future, as he said:

"Now, mother, we must leave the Scorpion, for those men can cut out through the hatches when they get sober, and though we could kill them one by one, still we cannot manage the ship."

"True, my son, but how can we leave?" asked the anxious mother.

"In the large life-boat, which is rigged for mainsail and jib, and I can canvas her over forward and make her all right."

"We will go at once to work. You can get stores and all else we need to carry, while I get the carpenter's tools and fit up the boat."

The spirit of the lad inspired his mother, and the two set hard to work. The stoutest canvas was firmly tacked over the deck forward, upon boards first nailed on, and the short mast and bowsprit put in place.

Then the boat, a very stanch one it was too, was lowered by the mother and son from the

davits, and lay quietly alongside the becalmed vessel.

Stores were then lowered into it and stored away forward. The two water-casks were filled by buckets let down by a rope by the woman and emptied by the lad into the improvised funnel made from a broken bottle.

It was dawn when all was in readiness. All through the night the two had worked amid the smothered curses and howlings of the men in the steerage.

As long as their liquor and wine held out they would take their captivity easily, and then sleep off their drunkenness.

But when they awoke to soberness, then they would look for their freedom and could, in time, cut their way out.

The lad had taken soundings and finding that the anchors could find bottom had let them fall, while he had also taken in what sail he could, so that in a gale, should one sweep down upon the vessel, she would ride easily.

A slight breeze came with the sunrise, and, taking the tiller, the lad headed away in a westerly direction, for he knew something of the bearings of the schooner and hoped to sight some of the Bahama Islands.

The gunwales of the boat had been boarded up, and canvas stretched over them, which would materially strengthen the little craft in which the destinies of the unfortunate woman and her children were placed, so the lad did not dread any ordinary weather they might encounter.

On her course held the little life-boat, away from the pirate schooner—the brave Boy Midshipman at the tiller. Until late in the afternoon the Sea Scorpion could be seen still riding at anchor, and with no one visible upon her decks.

Through the night the boat held on, the woman taking her trick at the tiller with the lad, for they were anxious to get as far away from the Scorpion as possible, and also to sight some island of the Bahamas, so would not take the rest they might have done by letting the boat lay-to, which they might have done with safety as the sea was very calm and wind hardly more than a two-knot breeze.

With the first glimmer of dawn the lad, who had the tiller, sung out cheerily:

"Land, ho!"

His mother awoke on the instant, and there, a couple of leagues ahead, was visible an island, with, afar off in the distance, another dark object, to show where another was located.

"They are the Acklin Islands, mother, I am sure, for I heard the chief say we were to the north-westward of them when chased by the brig, and the course we took would bring us now in the neighborhood of the southeast end of the Bahamas."

"You are doubtless right, my son, for I have heard the men speak of your nautical knowledge, and that you could soon navigate a vessel without aid. I am glad, too, there is land in sight, for I think we are going to have another storm."

"Yes, mother, it looks that way, and I only hope we can make a good harbor before it strikes us," and the lad devoted himself to his steering, not wishing to lose a minute, for the heavens were blackening fast with clouds.

As the wind increased the little boat bent to it and flew rapidly along, while the island, as they neared it, did not look very encouraging either as a harborage, or a place of abode.

But the lad held on, and while his mother steered he narrowly searched the island shores with the powerful glass he had brought from the schooner.

"There are reefs and unknown rocks encircling the island, mother, but we can run in, and I believe there are more places where we can find a fair anchorage," he said, after a close survey, and again taking the tiller he laid his course for the openings in the reefs.

There he passed through, and under shortened sail he ran close in and began to steer around the island in search of a harbor when he suddenly uttered a cry of joy and headed for the shore.

"The very place we wanted to find, mother," he said, as an inlet opened upon his view, narrow, yet free from sunken rocks, and penetrating the rocky coast for considerable distance.

Shut off from the wind by the overhanging rocks, the lad took his oars, and in a short while the boat was safely moored in a basin completely sheltered, while upon the shore were trees and grassy banks.

There was no sign of habitation, or anything to show that the foot of man had ever trod there before, and the scene was by no means uninviting, so a camp was quickly made ashore, and all gotten in readiness to make themselves

comfortable during the storm, which was now bearing down from seaward and causing them to feel thankful that they had not to face it in their boat, stanch as she was.

After a hearty supper, while his mother laid down in the little tent made from sails, to rest and get her little daughter to sleep, the lad climbed to the cliffs, whither he had gone that afternoon, and gazed out upon the tempest-swept sea.

Suddenly he uttered a startled cry, as a vivid flash of lightning revealed to him a vessel out upon the storm-tossed sea!

"It is a schooner—perhaps the Scorpion," he said, and hastily descending from the cliff he ran to the camp and told his mother of the discovery.

Little Kate was in dreamland, and hastily throwing a cloak about her the now frightened mother hastily followed her son to the cliff.

The storm was at its height, the waves running furiously down upon the island and fairly shaking it with their rude blows.

The clouds hung low and were as black as ink, while ever and anon they were rent in twain by the most vivid flashes of lightning, followed by peals of thunder like the broadside of a line-of-battle ship.

And while that vivid glare was upon the sea it revealed to the two on the cliff, a schooner, her masts gone, and the seas driving her right down upon the reefs that encircled the island.

Upon her deck men were seen clinging for their lives, in seeming despair.

On, on drove the vessel, now almost a wreck, at the mercy of the waves, and, in a minute more, she struck with terrible force upon the reef which encircled the island half a mile distant from the beach.

The crash, mingling with the cries of the men, the howling winds and roaring waters, reached the ears of the two on the cliff, and from the lips of the lad came the words:

"Mother, it is the Scorpion—our schooner!"

CHAPTER V.

THE TREASURE.

ON the cliff stood the two who had seen the fate of the schooner, and they gazed down upon the rocky shore beneath their feet, as though to pierce the gloom and behold the forms of the shipwrecked crew struggling in the mad waters for life.

But, no other cry was heard, no call for help, and the mother and son turned away from the spot and sought the little camp in the vale, where the baby girl, all unmindful of the horrors of the night, slept peacefully in the canvas tent.

The two crept in and also sought repose. Too well used to the howling winds and roar of the sea to be disturbed, they soon also sunk to sleep.

The storm blew itself out before dawn, the dark clouds drifted away, and the sun rose in a clear sky, while the waves, though still rolling landward with snowy caps, were diminishing in height and becoming less turbulent each minute.

The birds singing in the trees was a sound which the ears of the three unfortunates were unused to, and it awoke them.

All nature seemed beautiful, and while little Katie ran about to chase the birds, her brother built a fire and the mother prepared a substantial breakfast.

Then they had time to look about them, and ascending to the cliff they saw the wreck of the schooner lying high upon the reef.

Not a soul was visible aboard of her, both masts were gone and her bulwarks had been stove in by the force of the waves.

But the glass of the lad turned upon the schooner, proved to him that he had been right in his assertion that it was the pirate craft they had deserted, for there on her bows was the figurehead, a huge red scorpion.

"Mother, I do not believe there is a soul on board."

"Still, there may be, Clifford, and we must be cautious."

"Yes, mother, for if there were but two of them they would be that more anxious to rescue the treasure, and to kill us and take our boat."

"Yes, we will keep in hiding until we are certain, and then go out to the schooner, for this good weather will doubtless last now for a week or more."

"And the treasure, mother?"

"We must find a hiding-place for it, Clifford, for the jewels which I brought with me will be ample for our needs until we see what the future has in store for us," and the beautiful face again resumed its look of intense sadness, which quick-

ly changed, however, to an expression that was almost wicked in its intensity of hatred.

Then the two returned to the valley, and all that day the lad worked at improving the seaworthiness of their boat, his mother helping him.

The night passed away in quiet, and the next morning a tour of the island revealed half a dozen dead bodies cast upon the rocks.

If further proof was needed as to what the wreck was, the bodies were sufficient to give it, as the mother and son recognized the men of the pirate schooner.

They were buried in the sand by the lad, who had heard his mother say:

"It is hard for them to lie unburied, for they were human beings."

Another night passed, and the next morning, convinced that not a soul remained upon the schooner, the lad set sail and headed for the wreck.

The water was deep up to the reef, and the bow of the schooner projected beyond the rocks.

Climbing on board, the lad lowered a piece of ratline for his mother, and the two set out to investigate, little Kate following them about the vessel.

They saw that the crew had cut through the partition with their knives and had thus made their escape, but there was every evidence that they had kept up their carousal, for broken bottles and jugs lay about in profusion, and it was because they were unable to attend to the working of their vessel that she had gone to her destruction as she had.

The cabin was a scene of wildest confusion, for the crew had transferred their orgies there from the steerage, and the woman gazed sadly upon the sight.

The schooner was broken up badly in the hull, and realizing that another storm or two would break her to pieces, the lad and his mother set to work to get all that was valuable and not perishable, into their boat.

Captain Basil had quite a fortune in treasure hidden away on board. This was all transferred to the boat, which made several trips to the shore and back.

The lad also had an eye to their future safety, and with so much at his command in the way of tools, canvas, rigging and lumber, selected all that was needed to strengthen the boat, and also to add to her qualities as a stanch craft and to their comfort also.

The treasure was buried in a secluded spot, in casks taken from the schooner, and then ample stores were secured from the larder of the vessel to last them for a long time.

The following day the boy and his mother went to work in earnest upon the boat, and in a week's time had certainly transformed the little craft into a very safe and comfortable vessel, capable of resisting severe weather at sea.

When all was in readiness they set sail one morning, bright and early, steering west by north, the young Buccaneer Middy intending to run by the Bahama group as well as he could and thus reach the Coast of Florida.

Upon several islands they sought shelter during a day or more of rough weather, and at length left the last of the islands of the Bahamas astern and headed boldly out across the Florida Straits to cross to the mainland.

When the coast was sighted the lad said cheerfully:

"Now, mother, we have made the run in safety."

"Yes, my son, and it is all owing to your courage and skill, for I would have given up long ago."

"You are a wonderful sailor for your years, Clifford, and I feel that your career is to be a noble one, now that the lawless life we have been forced to lead has been buried in a past that we must try to forget."

"But if the chief should find us again, mother?"

"He is dead ere this, hanged to the yard-arm of that American cruiser for his crimes. He well deserved his fate!" was the savage reply.

The lad said nothing, for he knew the secret that weighed so heavily upon his mother, the words he had heard the buccaneer, Basil, utter when he left the cabin of the schooner, and left her in a deep swoon.

Those words told him how bitter was his mother's grief, and how deep her hatred had become for the man who had so deceived and wronged her.

Before, she had endured his evil career, but with his confession of wrong to her who had trusted him, she became so embittered as to hate even the memory of the man for whom she had forsaken home and all.

"Clifford?" suddenly asked the mother.

"Yes, dear mother."

"It is just one month since the schooner was wrecked, and now we sight the mainland. Have you any idea of the port you intend to make?"

"San Augustine, I had thought of, mother."

"My son, we can cruise by day and run in-shore by night, keeping the land not more than a league or two away, and thus hold on up to North Carolina."

"Yes mother, if you wish it."

"I do, for on the North Carolina Coast is my home and there still dwells my dear old father, on his plantation by the sea."

"I left it years ago, how many you need not know, to become the wife of the Buccaneer Basil."

"He saved my father and myself from capture by a pirate that was chasing our little plantation yacht, and we believed him to be all that he said he was—an officer in the Cartagena Navy."

"I loved him from the first, and, although others who loved me warned me against him, I neither heeded them nor believed what they said."

"At last they boldly said he was a pirate. My father was convinced of it, and bade me never to see him again, while a plan was arranged to capture his vessel the next time he put into the Sound, a sheet of water near our house."

"I was asked when he would come, so gave a wrong date, met him when he did arrive, and he urged me to fly with him to his vessel and become his bride."

"I loved him, was weak, and I did as he asked, and thus I became the Buccaneer's—bride."

She faltered at the last word, yet uttered it, for she would not tell the truth then, and so kept the secret of the mock-marriage in the schooner's cabin, little believing that the boy knew what she kept back.

"Now, my son, I wish to go to my home, and beg forgiveness of my poor old father, and ask him to welcome you and dear little Kate as his own children."

"I will know the shores when we see them, for I have sailed often from the plantation to Wilmington, and will find shelter there."

"I was becoming cruelly bitter, and cared not what would become of me; but now my mind is made up; I will go back to the dear old home, to the scene of my childhood, the spot where my mother is buried, and where my old father will welcome me—yes, all of us, with open arms."

"Now, my son, you know the course I wish you to steer."

"Yes, mother, and to your old home we will go!"

The little craft was headed up the coast, and went skimming along under a six-knot breeze, two leagues off-shore.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STORY OF A GRAVE.

"THERE is the Sound, my son; we are near home at last."

"Years have passed since I last saw those dear old shores, but I can never forget them."

"It was just here, where our little boat is now, that the pirate overhauled our yacht, in which were my father, myself, and a dozen negroes, the plantation crew men; and then Basil ran out of the sound yonder, where his vessel had gone for repairs, and recaptured us, defeating the pirate."

"Ah! what has not my lot been since those happy days of girlhood!"

"But sorrows are over now, and the future in the dear old home, for I will be forgiven, looms up brightly before me."

The woman had seemed to muse aloud rather than to address the lad, who sat at the tiller.

The little craft, weather-worn, and the worse for its rude buffeting with the wind and waves, had reached a point on the coast near the home of Celine Chetwyn, which she had fled from years before to become the wife of a man who had proven to be a buccaneer captain.

The little vessel had sailed by day, and hunted a harborage by night, and by not holding far off the land, the lad had been enabled to steer by the coast.

At last the mouth of the Cape Fear River was passed, and that pleasant afternoon the woman recognized the familiar scenes of her girlhood.

A long stretch of sand, with dunes here and there rising to a considerable height, formed what was known as the Sound, and beyond on the mainland were plantations here and there, the homes of rich Southerners.

An inlet in the sandy barrier was before them,

and through this the woman bade the lad steer, and the craft shot into the breakers and then into the quiet waters of the Sound.

"There is the barn, glimmering among the trees; but the foliage has become so dense I can not distinctly see the mansion," said the woman. Soon after she added:

"We will land yonder at the pier, Clifford; but it seems to be little used now, and I see no boats about it."

A cloud came upon her face, and she said nothing more while the youth ran alongside of a wharf that was crumbling to decay, and made fast.

Then he lowered sail and followed with little Kate, as the woman had told him to do, for she had hastily ascended the rickety steps to the highlands.

The boy followed, leading Kate by the hand, and they saw a couple of hundred yards away a large, substantial mansion.

But it seemed desolate and deserted, and the gravel-way leading to it was overgrown with weeds and grass.

But on the two children went to suddenly come upon the form of their mother, trembling and swaying, as with sudden weakness.

Her face was white, her eyes staring and she gazed at the mansion as though she looked upon the face of the dead.

"He is not here, my children, for I have been all around the house."

"The servants are not here, no one is here, all are gone."

"What can it mean?"

"Perhaps he has moved away, mother?"

"No, he would not leave this home, unless it was to go—"

"Where, mother?"

"To the grave—come!"

She bounded suddenly away leaving the boy and girl to follow her, and they saw her glide through the shrubbery along a path leading to a little copse of trees on the bank overlooking the sea.

It was an eighth of a mile distant, and she fairly ran there, while the two children followed as fast as little Kate could toddle along, for this path too was overgrown with weeds.

As they grew nearer the children saw through the trees a brick wall, also with the finger of Time touching it with decay.

A gate stood open and led into an inclosure fifty feet square.

A weeping willow grew in the center and its protecting branches completely sheltered the graves beneath.

It was the burying-ground of the Chetwyns for several generations, and perhaps a score of graves were there.

Over one grave a stone tablet had been recently erected; that is it had not become stained by the weather and time.

It was next to a similar tablet, the latter moss-grown and aged.

By the newer tomb knelt the woman, and her face was resting upon the cold stone, her arms outstretched across it as though to embrace it in loving clasp.

She uttered no word, only lay there like one whose grief was too deep for tears, or utterance.

Little Kate drew back at the gate, afraid to enter the dismal spot, but Clifford entered and stood with uncovered head by the tomb.

And his eyes fell upon the inscription on the stone, which was as follows:

"Beneath this stone

Rest the mortal ashes

of

CALVIN CHETWYN,

A gallant sailor of the Revolution.

"Died of a broken heart, because the idol of his heart and home, a once loving daughter, deserted him to become the Bride of a Buccaneer."

The boy already knew the story of his mother's life, but tears came into his eyes as he saw here cut into stone the story of her deed, and he pitied her in her deep anguish as she knelt there, her face upon the tomb, her arms thrown across it.

"Mother, twilight is coming on, so will you not come with me?" he said, presently.

She pressed her lips to the name of her father and rose instantly.

"Yes, Clifford, I will go; but I have read the cruel story this tablet tells."

"Come, we will go to the mansion, for rain threatens, and we can be comfortable there, for the place holds no terrors for me, nor does the world, now."

"Come!"

She spoke calmly, but there was a touching sadness in her voice.

They reached the piazza, and there a tablet of brass, but tarnished, met their eyes, and the woman bent over and read aloud what was engraved there:

"FROM THE WILL OF HENRY CHETWYN!

"And I will it that my home, known as Sea Vale Plantation, shall be allowed to crumble to decay, with all in the mansion as it now stands, the family burying-ground and all, to become a wilderness, a *terra incognita*, and I place the sum to pay taxes in the bank to be paid for one century, at the end of which time it may revert to the heirs, if any, of my daughter Celine; for thus long shall my curse rest upon her and those of her blood."

"If there be no heirs, I will that at the expiration of one hundred years from the date of my death, the burying-ground be plowed over, leaving no trace of a grave, the walls be torn down and the tablets broken and scattered, and the land of the estate revert to the Government as public lands, that the name of Chetwyn may be obliterated from the earth as far as those of my blood are concerned."

"And woe be unto those who dare cross the threshold of my home thus left, for good or evil, for my spirit shall haunt the spot."

Such was the engraving on brass which the woman read, and the boy too; but where Clifford had expected to see his mother fly in terror from the house, she said with a strange calmness:

"Come, my children; this is my home, our home, and here we will live."

"The place cannot be in bad repair within, for it is only three years since my father's death."

"See, the key is in the door, and I will enter, while you, my son, go to the boat and bring a couple of lanterns and some food."

The key turned creakingly in the lock, and with a face that had become bitter, almost savage, the woman stepped across the threshold into the spacious hall, Kate following her, while Clifford went on his errand to the boat.

When he returned he found a fire blazing in the spacious library, a lamp which was half-filled with oil, as it had been left after the funeral, gave a cheery light, and the gloom of twilight without was banished from the mansion.

All had been left just as when the master died, for no one had dared intrude there once the attorney had placed the brass tablet with its warning upon the door.

Even provisions, old and musty, were found in the storeroom, and the room of the recreant daughter, to her horror, she found draped in crape, as though for her death.

It was a large, weird old structure, but the heart of the returned woman seemed turned to gall, her nature had become suddenly warped, and she held no fear of her surroundings.

It was her home, and she would remain there.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT THE MOONLIGHT REVEALED.

It was a gloomy night in the old mansion, with the wind whistling mournfully about the eaves, and the rain pattering upon the roof like clods upon a coffin-lid.

The lad had brought some things from the little craft, which had been left moored to the wharf, and the children ate a good supper, though the desolate woman touched not a morsel of food.

And while they slept she paced to and fro, her heart and brain aching with the memories called up by the spot where she was.

Not once did she close her eyes, for when tired of her pacing to and fro she took the lamp and went over the entire house, from cellar to garret, as though she sought for some one, or even longed to have her father keep his threat to haunt the place that she might meet his spirit.

At last the day dawned, and Clifford hastened down to the boat.

No one had been there and nothing had been disturbed.

Securing some provisions for breakfast he returned to the mansion, and the rain continuing to fall the day thus passed.

The next morning they moved all on board the craft into the mansion, and a boat lying upon the shore was patched up, and the little vessel that had served them so well was towed out to an anchorage.

Several days after a voyage was made in the little vessel to Wilmington, where ample stores were purchased to last several months, and they were paid for in Spanish gold, to the surprise of the dealers.

Then it began to be noised about that strange people dwelt at Sea Vale Mansion, and a mere boy was seen flying up and down the Sound in a

gale, in a long, narrow boat which seemed to ride the waves like a life-skiff.

The negroes from adjoining plantations soon discovered that the Sea Vale Mansion was occupied, and they looked upon the dwellers there as akin to Satan, for what human beings would dare face the curse and threat of the old master of the place.

With his rifle Clifford was wont to roam the thousands of acres belonging to the place, and furnish the table with game, while he found fish and oysters in abundance in the waters of the Sound.

His mother did the housework, quietly, sadly, and with no murmur at her lot.

She was content to be in her own home once more, bitter, cruel though every recollection was to her.

And the boy and girl seemed equally content to pass away their lives there.

Their mother taught them a couple of hours each day, and with his gun and boat Clifford managed to pass away the time without being bored, while little Kate devoted her time to helping her mother.

The neighbors shunned the vicinity even more than when the mansion was deserted, and fishermen would not even land on the shores, while the negroes never went within a mile of the plantation limits after nightfall.

When asked, at his voyages to town after provisions, who he was, and about his mother, Clifford was wont to say:

"My name is Clifford Sweegan, and as we disturb no one, I think others should leave us and our affairs alone."

One day some one saw Mrs. Sweegan, as Celine now called herself, and recognized her as the once beautiful belle and heiress.

It was one of her old lovers, a rival of Buccaneer Basil, and who had warned her against the outlaw rover.

He was shocked in the change which a few years had made in her appearance, for already was her hair whitening, and her beauty had lost its softness, her eyes their bewitching fascination of old, and become cold, piercing, and a cynical almost cruel expression rested upon her face.

"Great God! Can this be you, Celine Chetwyn?" cried the planter, as he drew his horse suddenly to a halt, while passing the gate leading into the plantation from the main road, and beheld the woman standing there.

She had extended her walk further than was her wont, and leaning upon the gate had seemed unconscious of his presence until he drew rein before her and she heard his words.

He had been true to his love for her and had never married.

Now his face paled and he gazed like one fascinated at beholding in the mysterious mistress of Sea Vale none other than the woman whom he had never ceased to love.

She regarded him coldly and responded:

"Yes, I am the wreck of her that was once Celine Chetwyn, she into whose ears thou once poured vows of love."

"I know that thou didst mean me well, Robert Mayo, and in what I am to-day thou art awfully avenged."

"Go, and never cross my path again, or I will bring blight upon thee and thine."

She had drawn herself up to her full height and faced him now, her hands glittering with jeweled rings, her wrists crowded with bracelets, while her dress was rich and out of place there in the woodland.

She looked weird and wild, and the man seemed to shrink away as in awe of her, for he raised his hat and rode off in silence, while a mocking laugh echoed in his ears, a laugh that grated harshly upon his senses, for once her voice had been as music to him.

From that day it became known that Celine Chetwyn, the buccaneer's bride, had returned to her home, in defiance of her father's curse, his will and his threat, and she came to be regarded with real awe, while the negroes called her a witch and soon the more superstitious among the whites began to regard her in the same light.

Thus did Sea Vale and its mysterious dwellers become more than ever shunned.

A year and more went by, and one bright moonlight night Celine was pacing up and down the piazza, and alone, for Clifford had gone that day to Wilmington after provisions, usually a two days' voyage, and Kate lay asleep in her little bed, the same in which the young heiress of Sea Vale had slumbered in her innocent girlhood.

Suddenly she started, for she had seen no vessel enter the inlet, and yet one now swept into view in front of the mansion, ran up into the wind and dropped anchor.

It was a schooner, and she had a rakish, saucy look, such as free-rovers of that day had.

"Hal a vessel anchoring here and she has the look of a pirate."

"Hal hal coming here to pillage, as prizes at sea are scarce, I suppose."

"Well, he is welcome to all that he can carry off; but I rejoice that Clifford is away, and neither Kate nor I must be seen."

"I will carry her to the old secret room in the attic, and then return and watch for the coming of the robbers."

So saying she hastened to the room where Kate slept, roused her and bore her away to the secret chamber, where in Revolutionary days the Chetwyns had hidden their valuables from the British.

Then she put out the lamp, caused the room to look like as if it had not been recently occupied, and closing the front door, concealed herself at a window in the parlor.

The moon shone with unwonted brilliancy, and the vessel was distinctly seen at anchor, her sails remaining set, excepting her jib.

Then a form was seen coming along the weed-grown walk to the bluff, on which stood a rustic arbor.

The form was clad in white and came slowly, directly toward the mansion.

Nearer and nearer he approached, the eyes of the woman riveted upon him.

The form was tall, commanding, clad in a snow-white suit, even the tarpaulin being white.

The face was dark, a mustache shaded the upper lip, and long curling hair fell upon his shoulders.

He halted at the first step and regarded the place with silent interest.

In one hand he carried a sword, and a pistol was stuck in a white sash about his waist.

"No, the place is deserted, surely, for no one can dwell here," he murmured, and his words reached the ears of the woman at the open window.

Then his eyes fell upon the large brass plate upon the door, and ascending the steps he read by the light of the moon shining full upon it, what was engraven there.

"Hal a broken heart killed him, did it?"

"And she has not returned, that is evident—not yet."

"But she will come here, for as surely as a murderer is seized with a longing that is inevitable to gaze upon the grave of his victim, so surely does one exiled from home in childhood, return to it in later years."

"Yes, she will come back here, and the children I must have, while she must die."

"I can wait yet awhile." With this the man turned slowly upon his heel, glanced about the place for a few minutes and then walked back to the shore.

Soon after his jib was run up and the schooner swung around and headed out of the Sound.

Like a deer the woman ran to the arbor and leveled a spy-glass at the vessel.

"It is an armed craft, crowded with men, so he is no apparition; no, he escaped the gallows and is once more afloat and the black flag waves over him."

"He will come back; Basil the Buccaneer never fails to keep his threat, so I must fly from here."

"Yes, we must go far away, where he can never find us, and he must deem us dead."

Some days after it became noised about that the little craft with its boy skipper was no longer seen on the waters of the Sound; fishermen no longer beheld lights in the mansion of Sea Vale at night, and the mysterious dwellers of the place were known to have departed as strangely as they had come.

CHAPTER VIII.

A STRANGER IN PORT.

THE little seaport town of — on the Massachusetts Coast was in a ferment of excitement one morning over a double murder committed in the vicinity by parties unknown.

It was said that a vessel had sailed into the harbor during the night, on Christmas Eve, when a violent storm of snow was in progress, and she had run up the inlet and dropped anchor off a desolate, cedar-clad point whereon stood a small cottage, the home of a fisherman and his wife.

They had come there two years before, built their home far away from their neighbors, and seemed content to live in isolation.

The man now and then brought in a cargo of fish to the town, fishing alone, and yet this seemed hardly to afford a living for the two, and

folks began to regard them with suspicion, until on Christmas morning a hunter went into their cot to warm himself and found them both dead.

There were tracks leading down to the shore through the snow, where a boat had landed, and the man and his wife had seemingly been killed with cutlasses, and trails of blood dyeing the snow to the water's edge showed that those who had done the foul deed had also suffered severely at the hands of the two who had fought for their lives.

And more, the hearth had been dug up, and a broken box, iron-bound, lay upon the floor, and had evidently been robbed of a valuable treasure.

This would prove that the man and his wife had not been poor, and others knew of their riches hidden away in their humble home.

The hunter reported his ghastly discovery to the authorities of the little seaport, two miles away, and all day long a stream of humanity was going to and from the house.

The bodies were buried on the cliff, beneath a wide-branched pine, and the humble home was closed and from that day avoided by all as a fatal spot, and one where evil spirits dwelt.

Men who sailed by at night were wont to assert that they saw white robed forms upon the cliff, near the two graves, and others claimed to have heard piteous cries for help.

Every Christmas Eve it was said cries could be distinctly heard coming from the cliff, and reaching the ears of sailors upon the deck of vessels anchored a mile away in the harbor.

In truth it soon became so well known a fact that the Overlook Cottage was haunted, that masters of vessels coming to port would never seek an anchorage in the upper part of the harbor, where they could be within hail of the dreaded spot.

Thus several years went by, and one morning an unknown sloop ran into the little port and dropped anchor above the town.

The craft was of some thirty tons burden, and as thin of build and rig as any coaster known to the port.

She carried a great deal of canvas, was high in bow and stern, and very roomy and comfortable she appeared.

But three persons were visible upon her decks, and two of these were clad in feminine garb.

No one in the port recognized the craft, and she created surprise by running up above the town further than vessels of late years had dared to venture, on account of the spirits said to haunt the Overlook Point, where the midnight double murder had been committed.

Sweeping around gracefully the sloop's anchor was let fall, her sails came down with an easy run, and a light skiff was lowered from the stern davits, and started shoreward with but one occupant.

The idlers on the wharves regarded the boat curiously and gathered to note the oarsman.

The latter sent his skiff along with a powerful, skillful stroke that showed the perfect seaman, and as he ran it up on the sands, he drew it out of the water with a strength that won general admiration.

As he turned the crowd saw a tall, elegantly formed youth, scarcely over twenty, with a face bronzed by long sea service, waving brown hair and features that were cast in a noble mold.

He was strangely handsome, with a cheery, daring face, full of determination, while his carriage was upright, dignified though graceful.

About him, taken altogether was a Devil-I-care air that was very attractive, added to a manliness that was undimmed.

He was attired in a sailor suit of dark blue, with a black silk scarf knotted under his broad collar, and in the corners of the latter were neatly-embroidered anchors in gold thread.

About his waist was a scarlet silk sash, in which was a pistol and long knife, and his head was surmounted by a blue silk tarpaulin encircled by a gold cord, and with an anchor embroidered on the front.

A dandy sailor he would be taken for, until one looked into his face and saw there the perfect man.

As he turned toward the crowd, he doffed his tarpaulin gracefully, and said in a pleasant way:

"Good-afternoon to you, gentlemen."

The salute was returned, and the sailor was passing on up into the town, when one of those bullies, always to be found ready for trouble, stepped directly in front of him and said:

"Hello, young Bandbox, what are yer business in this town, and what colors does yer sail under, fer I notices you has no flag at your peak?"

"Show me your authority, my man, for asking your questions, and I will answer you."

"My authority is this," and the bully shook his huge fist in the face of the sailor.

"Is that all the authority you have?"

"It is enough to make you answer, if you don't wish to feel my grip," was the insulting remark.

"Then here is my answer, sir," and quick as a flash the fist of the sailor dealt the bully a blow full in his face, which fairly lifted him off of his feet and felled him to the ground with a force that stunned him, while the blood-stains that followed the blow showed how terrible it had been.

A general cheer greeted the act, for the bully was a dangerous character, feared by all, and avoided even by the bravest of men, who cared for no trouble with him.

His great strength, and his known readiness to use a knife, caused him to be feared, while in the eyes of those who dreaded him most, he was a pretended hero.

He had made the threat that he would know the sailor's business ashore as soon as he landed, throwing out the hint that the craft was doubtless a smuggler.

But his downfall was greeted with a cheer, and the young sailor passed on without even a look at the prostrate form of the town bully.

Abe Holly, for such was the bully's name, arose to his feet bewildered by the blow he had received.

He glared about him, but nowhere beheld the one who had so quickly and well resented his insult to him.

The crowd stood by in silence, awed now that the tiger was about to show his claws.

"What did he hit me with?" he growled, savagely.

"His fist," ventured some one.

"You lie! he had a piece o' iron in his hand, for see how my face is cut and bleeding."

The "lie direct" was not resented by the one who had answered him, and then came the query:

"Where is he?"

"Gone up-town."

"That blow with a piece o' iron must have stunned me, for I didn't see him go."

"He was a coward to strike a man without warning, and with a piece o' iron, and you is all a lot o' cowards not to arrest him for it."

"But just wait until he returns, and see if I don't revenge that blow—you hear me, don't you?"

A number answered in chorus in the affirmative, and stepping down to the boat of the young sailor, Abe Holly sat down upon it, took out his long-bladed, ugly knife and patiently awaited the return of the one who had so promptly punished his impertinence.

CHAPTER IX.

A DUEL WITH KNIVES.

IT was a quaint old town, for even then it was an ancient place, that the young stranger found himself in, and the people were seafaring men and their families, with a few tradesmen.

Ships sailed from there the world over, and many a gallant sailor had the little port produced, and one and all were honest, hard-working people who admired pluck and were true patriots.

The youth had made his way up to the town, made a slight purchase at a store, and then made inquiry regarding the possibility of securing a little home there, or rather in the outskirts of the place.

The tradesman was the very man to know, as he owned several houses; but he was sorry that all were occupied just then, and he did not remember a single cottage then for rent.

"There is a cottage upon the cliff up the harbor, which seemed to be unoccupied, sir," suggested the youth.

Merchant Daley fairly started, while he said in a whisper:

"You cannot mean the Haunted Cabin?"

"I mean the cottage, or cabin upon a bold cliff clad with cedars and pines above the town, if that is the place you call haunted," said the sailor with a smile.

"That's the place, sir, and if you have got the nerve to take that place you can have it and welcome."

"What is it haunted by?"

The merchant told the story of the double murder in Overlook Cottage, and then the young sailor said:

"Well, I rather like the place, and as I do not dread ghosts, I will see the owner of it."

"It belongs to me, sir, and as I said you are welcome to it, if you will live there."

"No, thank you, I prefer to buy it; if you will name your price."

"Well, sir, there are five acres to go with it, a couple down in the valley that are good for raising vegetables, and there is wood in plenty, while the cabin is of logs, has four rooms and is not uncomfortable."

"It has some little furniture in it, and there the inlet puts in beyond the cliff, forming a snug harbor for small craft, only I have yet to know the skipper that would drop anchor there."

"I will, sir, this night if you will name your price, for I have a little craft at anchor off the town now."

"Say a couple of hundred, sir, for it, as it stands."

"Draw up a deed and here is your money," and the young sailor took out a purse heavy with gold.

"In what name, sir?"

"Make it in the name of Salina Sweegan, please."

"I will, sir, and here is the key, which I have not touched since it was locked the day after the murder."

"The man and his wife are buried right there, sir, I should tell you."

"They will not prove bad neighbors, I am sure, and we will not disturb them."

"I see that you have some furniture and when we know what we want, I will give you a call and sign the papers—say to-morrow," and the sailor walked out leaving the amazed merchant gazing blankly after him, for to have any one willing to buy and live in the Overlook Cottage surpassed his comprehension.

The sailor then retraced his steps toward the wharves, walking with a graceful, swinging manner that showed one in perfect health, and at peace with the world in general.

He saw the now large crowd gathered at the shore, near his boat, but did not hesitate, and really seemed to have forgotten his affair with the bully, Abe Holly.

But that worthy had not forgotten the blow given him, and having stanchied the bleeding from his nose and brow, sat, knife in hand, ugly in humor and anxious to avenge the insult put upon him, for he considered himself the injured party.

There were those in the crowd only too anxious to see an affray, and others still who were determined that the bully should not go too far with a stranger in the town.

What they had seen led them to believe that the young stranger was not one to be trifled with, and all seemed to feel that he had struck the bully with some hard instrument held in his hand, so stunning had been the blow.

As the young man came in sight, the murmur of voices ceased and all eyes were upon him.

"Ah, mates, admiring my skiff, I see; well, it is a pretty boat, is it not?"

Several replied, and as the youth now stood by the boat, ready to shove it into the water, Abe Holly still kept his seat upon it.

"You will kindly move, sir, if you please," said the sailor politely.

"But I don't please, young dandy."

"Ah! you are the same fellow that I was forced to strike down a while since. Do you wish to feel the weight of my hand again?"

"It wasn't yer hand yer hit me with, but a stone, or piece of iron, you coward!"

Again the fist shot forth, and once more the bully was taken unawares.

Full in his face the blow fell, and Abe Holly was sent over backward off of the boat.

With a cry like a savage dog he sprang to his feet and rushed upon the sailor, his long knife drawn.

A dozen men sprang forward to check him, but the sailor waved them back, his own knife flashed from his belt, and he caught the blade of the bully upon his own and held it there.

Abe Holly released the pressure at once and again sought to use the ugly knife, but again his blow was parried.

Maddened, at being so skillfully foiled, the bully tried time and again to drive his knife into the heart of the young sailor, who skillfully parried every thrust, slash and blow, and yet his smile never left his face.

The crowd shouted with admiration and delight, at seeing the bully thus thwarted, and stung at their applause for his foe and derision for him, Abe Holly made a mighty spring and it seemed had gained the victory.

But the sailor dropped quickly upon one knee, thus avoiding the rush and blow, seized the bully in a grip of iron and hurling him clean over his head with an exhibition of strength that seemed supernatural, walked quietly up

to the stunned and almost lifeless man and said:

"My man, you are worsted, and I feel no ill-will toward a fallen foe, so here's my hand."

"I'll have your life yet some day for this," gasped the bully.

"Ah, that is your game is it?"

"So be it, I care not, so long as you do not get in my way," and raising his bat to the cheering crowd he shoved his boat into the water, though a score of hands were ready to do it for him, and seizing the oars pulled rapidly away, without even another glance at the bully, who was skulking away, followed by several who from some motive known to themselves, still clung to him in his fall.

As for the crowd in general they were delighted at the downfall of Abe Holly and looked upon the stranger as a hero of no common order.

Eagerly they watched him as he rowed back to his sloop, saw him board and drop his boat astern to tow it there, and then beheld the anchor raised, the jib run up and the little sloop glide away from her anchorage.

But a cry of amazement went up in a chorus as they saw the sloop run up the harbor and drop anchor under the very shadow of the cliff whereon stood the haunted cabin.

CHAPTER X.

A MYSTERIOUS TRIO.

THE little sloop that had run into the port of M—, dropped anchor in the inlet that swept inland beyond Overlook Cliff.

The young sailor upon his return on board had been welcomed by the only two other occupants besides himself upon the sloop, and who had watched the scene ashore with considerable interest and some alarm.

One of these was a woman of perhaps forty, when one closely regarded her face, though at a glance she appeared older, for her hair was streaked with silver.

Her face bore traces of having once been very beautiful, and her form was still elegant, her movements graceful.

But her complexion was bronzed almost to the hue of an Indian, her eyes seemed to have receded in their sockets, and looked forth black, piercing, threatening from heavy, arched brows, while the long lashes gave them an expression hard to define.

Her teeth were even, snow-white, and gave her a sinister smile when they were visible, and her chin was firm, her mouth possessed an almost cruel expression, and altogether it was a very remarkable face to behold.

In her ears hung heavy rings studded with rubies, and about her neck was a necklace of emeralds which gave a beautiful glare as the sunlight fell upon her.

Both wrists, and her fingers were ornamented with bracelets and rings, set with precious stones.

Her dress was deep black, cut close, showing her form, and with a red scarf encircling her slender waist, and in this was thrust a jeweled knife.

Upon her head she wore a Turkish fez cap, of black, ornamented with a silver tassel, and with a big skull and cross-bones in front.

Altogether she was a remarkable-looking woman, and one to stand in awe of.

The other person who had welcomed back the young sailor, was a young girl of fourteen, a picture of grace and beauty.

She was dressed in a light-fitting sailor suit of blue cloth, trimmed with silver lace, wore a scarlet Turkish fez, ornamented with a gold tassel and gold anchor, and about her waist was a white silk sash.

She wore no jewelry, nor was there a weapon in her sash, or otherwheres visible about her.

Her face was well browned by exposure, flushed with the tint of perfect health, and she was certainly very beautiful.

"There was some trouble ashore, my son?" said the woman as the young sailor reached the sloop.

"No more than that I had to punish a bully, mother, who sought to make trouble."

"But I have a house for us!"

"Where?"

"It is the cottage yonder, which you said you liked."

"I am glad, for we can live aloof there from others."

"I bought it, with five acres, for a couple of hundred dollars, and there is good anchorage in the inlet beyond the cliff, and the cabin has four

rooms and has some little furniture in it now; but it is said to be haunted."

"Good! that will keep neighbors from being too intimate," was the reply of the woman.

The anchor was then gotten up, the woman and girl working like regular sailors, and the sloop stood on to an anchorage under the cliff.

The three landed and went up to the cabin by the steep path, and opening the door they found it a very comfortable home.

"Make a list of what you need, mother, and I will sail down to-morrow and get the things; but in the mean time we will open the house and clean up," said the youth.

"Yes, and this is the very place for us, and I am delighted with our new home."

"And so am I, mother, but there are two graves on the cliff," said the young girl, who had been strolling around the premises.

"So much the better," was the stern reply of the woman, and she added, as she stepped out in front of the log cottage:

"The view is grand from here, and we can make certain improvements that will add to our comforts immensely."

The three then set to work cleaning house, and when they returned on board their craft at sunset the place presented a very different appearance from what it had on their arrival.

The next morning the young sailor alone sailed down to the town, ran alongside of a wharf with a skill which the idlers there admired immensely, and went up to the store of the merchant from whom he had purchased the cottage.

"Ah, good-morning, sir; come to back out from your bargain, I suppose?" said the merchant, as the young sailor entered.

"Oh, no, why should I?"

"On account of the ghosts?"

"We do not mind them in the least," was the smiling reply.

The papers were then signed, and some needed purchases made, and sent down on board the sloop, which at once cast off and sailed up the harbor.

The youth anchored fore and aft just under the overhanging cliff, and going ashore soon had a rope lowered to the deck, to haul up the things he had purchased.

By night the little home was in good trim, and the sloop was carried to an anchorage around the point of the cliff, where she would be safe in bad weather.

The coming of the strange trio to the port, and the purchase of the Haunted Hut of Overlook Cliff created a sensation in the little seaport town.

The denizens of the place were more or less filled with superstition, and they had strange fancies regarding the strangers.

The able manner in which the young sailor had met and handled the town bully, Abe Holly, had made him very popular, while there was that in his general appearance and pleasant manners to win admiration and respect.

His sloop certainly was a costly-built vessel, and what business he was going to put her in was what bothered the people, while some of the skippers of the coasting packets feared that they were to have a dangerous opposition in the new-comer.

The first Saturday after the arrival of the strangers was market-day, and the sailor, his mother and sister, went down into the town, rowing there in their skiff.

They were gazed at curiously, and many a one shrunk from the piercing glance of the woman, while the beauty of the young girl won general praise.

They strolled about the town, seemingly unmindful of the stares they attracted, made some purchases and started for home.

But as they moved away from the wharf their ears were greeted with the words:

"That woman is a witch, mates, mark my words."

Quick came the answer from the woman.

"Then beware and not cross my path for evil."

The man shuddered and the crowd remained silent, while the young sailor said:

"The one who spoke, mother, was the man I punished the day we arrived in port."

"I must keep my eye on him, for he means trouble."

"Yes, a man seldom forgives a blow, and certainly I would not, Clifford."

"But this is our home, yours, Kate's and mine, and we are not to be driven from it by fear and threats."

"No, mother, we will remain here, for we have been wanderers long enough," and the young sailor sighed as though the memories of his past were not of the pleasantest nature.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SAILOR SPENDTHRIFT.

SITUATED upon a hill overlooking the town in one direction, and with grounds sloping down to the harbor on another, while in the rear was a fine woodland, stood a mansion which was the pride of the good people of M—.

The master also of the mansion was an object of admiration, for he had served his country well in the war of the Revolution, two-score years before, and left a leg upon a death-storm deck, yet captured the enemy's ship after receiving as all had then believed his fatal wound.

Commodore Caleb Carr, was his name, and he had come from a good American family, who were poor.

But the prizes of the daring sailor had enriched him, and after leaving the service he had built the mansion on the hill overlooking M— and gone there to pass the remainder of his days, though he was then but a young man.

The home he had given the name of Harborage Hall, and as it was a fine mansion, handsomely furnished, and with many broad acres surrounding it, while a large bank account, and interest in several clipper ships would bring in a liberal income to support the luxury, there were a number of young maidens who at once set their caps for the dashing young commodore, considering his wooden leg nothing to be ashamed of.

One of these maidens, the only child of the village doctor, was so fortunate as to capture the commodore, and so became the wife of Caleb Carr.

As the years went by and no child was born to bless the union, the commodore adopted his brother's son, a handsome lad of eight years, who had also a fortune in his own right left by his parents, and of which the old sailor was the sole executor.

But soon after the arrival of young Kenton Carr at the Harborage Hall, a little girl was born to become the idol of her father's heart, for the mother died soon after the birth of the infant.

The commodore was greatly prostrated by the death of his loving wife; but he rallied for the sake of the little daughter, and a competent nurse was found to take charge of the little Ethel, and the father began to feel after all that there was much to live for.

Some years after, his nephew, Kenton Carr, was sent into the navy as a midshipman, and the commodore held bright hopes of a distinguished career for him.

But after half a dozen years of service he returned home, dismissed for his wild career, and at once entered upon a fast life which soon gained for him the name of being reckless and a dissipated spendthrift.

His uncle at last put a check upon him, and he toned down, to all outward appearances, but in secret was as wild as ever, and often spent whole nights at the gaming-table when in Boston or New York.

The commodore at length sent him to sea as first mate of a clipper ship, and after a voyage of two years he returned to report a most successful cruise in a financial way, and that the captain had been lost at sea in a storm the first night out, so that he had been in command ever since.

His uncle was proud of his achievement, and hoped to make something of him after all; but as soon as he had been at home a few weeks, his old wild ways broke forth, and his orgies and gambling became the talk of the town.

Again, after a few months ashore, the commodore sent the young man to sea, this time in command of a merchant brig trading in South America, and three more years passed ere his return, and once more his cruise proved a financial success.

Upon his return, too, he found his cousin Ethel grown to be a beautiful girl of seventeen, and he fell desperately in love with her.

But Ethel did not love her wayward, reckless cousin; she read him aright as insincere and wicked, and so refused him, and upon this a debauch of weeks followed, which very nearly ended in the commodore driving the young man from his home forever.

But when convinced that this would be the result, Kenton Carr changed at once, and from that day his orgies were few and far between; that is, those that were known to his uncle, while he was no longer seen at the gaming-table in the village tavern, and passed most of his time in his little yacht, cruising about the vicinity of M—, or riding horseback through the adjoining country.

One night when in Boston, Kenton Carr went

to the house of a money-lender, and when ushered into the library, said abruptly:

"Keys, I have come for more money."

"I told you the last time, Mr. Carr, that I could advance you no more," said the money-lender, a shrewd-faced man and an attorney.

"But you must, Keys, for my uncle gave me a couple of thousand to pay taxes and make some purchases with, and I lost it at cards last night after arriving in town."

"I have played all day on my notes, hoping to win it back, but now am out the two thousand and half as much more in I. O. U.'s at sight."

"Mr. Carr, let us understand each other."

"That is just what I desire, Keys."

"Your parents' will left you a fortune of just seventy thousand dollars, which your uncle's good management has very nearly doubled."

"Now, the will read that he was to allow you what income he deemed best per year, and to retain control of the principal until he felt that it was right to intrust it to your keeping."

"Is not that so?"

"It is."

"Now, you came to me with papers showing exactly what your property consisted of, and asked for a loan."

"I investigated, and so gave it to you, as all was right."

"Now, your uncle allows you a couple of thousand a year, and gives you your home, so that is liberal enough; but he will not intrust you with the control of your property, and he is right."

"And you, for loans advanced, have mortgaged to me every dollar of your inheritance, and its accumulated value, to be paid into my hands when you come into possession."

"Now, I have advanced you, in the last half dozen years, just sixty-five thousand dollars, all of which you have spent in riotous living and at the gaming-table."

"It is true; but I want five thousand more, Keys."

"Very well, I will give it to you, but not a dollar more after this, and you must now understand it."

"You will have then had the amount of your inheritance, and my pay will be its accumulated value, which runs as high as fifty thousand, and I deserve every dollar for taking the chances."

"Come, I will count you out the money, for this was my collection day for house rents and ship charters, and I happen to have the sum with me to-night."

He went to an iron safe in the room and took out a bag of money, counting the amount before the young man.

"Now, Carr, take my advice and leave two thousand with me, the amount your uncle gave you for taxes and purchases, and attend to that business the first thing for him to-morrow morning."

"No, I'll take it all, for I'll not gamble to-night," and with the five thousand dollars in his pockets the young gambler left the attorney's house.

An hour after and he stood at the gaming table in a fashionable Hall of Fortune, and was losing rapidly and steadily, for luck was running against him.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAST RESORT.

WHEN Kenton Carr looked about the rooms, after entering the Hall of Fortune, he was not long in finding some congenial spirits, and he was welcomed by the master of the house who had always known him to be a good loser in all games he played.

He took up his I. O. U. notes to the keeper and a few friends, placed the two thousand due his uncle in a separate pocket and began to gamble upon the balance.

He won for awhile, but soon luck changed and he began to lose steadily.

Growing reckless and nervous he increased his bets, and by midnight his limit was reached.

Feeling assured that luck must change, he began to draw upon his two thousand laid aside, and in two hours this was also gone.

Then he began to borrow from the keeper, and at last turned from the table five hundred dollars in debt and without a dollar in his pocket.

"My God! I am ruined, unless Keys comes to my aid again, and I feel that he will never do it!"

"No, I am ruined, for my uncle will never forgive me now, and the truth will come out that I have mortgaged every dollar of my inheritance."

"What am I to do?"

"Allow me to tell you, sir."

Kenton Carr started at the voice, for in his preoccupation he had not observed that another person sat in the darkened room which he had entered, after leaving the gaming-table.

He was half-inclined to resent the words of the stranger, who he knew must have heard his muttered words.

But he said, sullenly:

"I was not addressing you, sir."

"But I did address you, Captain Kenton Carr, and I am sorry you are in such a scrape."

"Ah! can it be that you are he whom they call Red Ralph Rogers down in M—?"

"I am he, sir."

"But you look so different from the man I have often seen there who answers to that name."

"I am an humble fisherman there, sir, dressed in coarse garb; but here I am a gentleman, and so attire myself."

"Yes, and it is hinted that you are in league with smugglers, I now recall."

"Yes, folks will talk, you know, for they say some very evil things of you."

"But let me repeat my words to allow me to tell you what to do to save yourself from ruin?"

"You overheard my words then?"

"Yes, I had just won heavily, and came in here, for a quiet smoke and to calm my nerves, and you followed me into the room a few moments after, and it seems luck has gone against you."

"Yes, I have lost my last dollar."

"Get more."

"That is good advice, but how?"

"Enter my service."

"Yours?"

"Yes."

"As a fisherman?"

"In one sense yes, but we will fish for gold."

"How do you mean?"

"Are you aware that smuggled goods bring a high price?"

"So I have heard."

"Well, it is easy for you, under certain circumstances, to get the handling of certain smuggled goods of a costly kind, and make a very handsome income thereby."

"Sir! do you intend to insult me?"

"How, pray?"

"By asking me to league myself with lawless men?"

"My dear Mr. Carr, do not get angry, for I wish to help you and can do so."

"Now you have just confessed to having ruined yourself at the gaming table to-night, and I know enough of your uncle to understand that he is not one to tolerate gambling and other arts in his nephew."

"You spoke of a man by the name of Keys, and I happen to know that he has you in his power."

"Your temper is aroused at the thought of wishing to have you league yourself with lawless men, and yet I was the one in M— who advanced the money to Landlord Lucas of the tavern, on your note, indorsed by your uncle."

"In twenty days that note is due, and I happen to know that not wishing to trouble your uncle with so slight a thing as writing his name on your note of hand for five hundred for ninety days, you simply wrote it for him."

"My God!" gasped the young man.

"Now as you told the landlord that you wished to borrow the money secretly on your note, he said that he knew a man who would do it for a large per cent."

"That man is before you, and—"

"You?"

"Yes, I was disguised then, when I met you, and I told you to get your uncle's indorsement and you should have the money."

"You said you would do so and the next day met me and the indorsement was there; but I happen to know that your uncle was in New York at the time, so now do not get angry when I suggest a plan to help you out of your trouble by lawless acts, and to enrich you as well."

"Are you ready to talk business, Mr. Carr?"

"You have me in your power, so what reply can I make but that of yes," was the sullen response.

"Well, I'll explain the situation and your duties, if you will come with me to my rooms."

The young man obeyed in silence, and leaving the hall after a walk of a few blocks his guide halted at a house, let himself in with a key, and ascending a dimly lighted stairway unlocked a door upon the right.

It was a comfortable bedroom, a fire burned on the hearth, a table was there with books and other things upon it, and a clothes-press stood

near, while there were a couple of easy-chairs inviting rest.

A decanter and glasses were upon a shelf near and placing them before his visitor the host said:

"To our better acquaintance, Captain Carr, and your success."

"Thank you," and the toast was drunk.

The host was a man of fiery red hair and beard, and dressed most extravagantly.

He wore eye-glasses, a watch, fob-chain, seal ring, and in his scarf glittered a diamond pin.

He carried a gold-headed cane, wore patent-leather gaiters, and in fact was attired as an exquisite.

"Captain Carr, you have known me for years only as Red Ralph, a fisherman, and suspected of smuggling."

"I was born a gentleman, was once an officer in the Navy of the United States, and am now off duty for a week and enjoying myself in town."

"I am a smuggler, however, and I make a very handsome living by the work, and I need your aid, and we can do still better."

"I am fond of a game of cards and to-night won just five thousand six hundred dollars, while you lost—"

"Just one thousand less than that sum."

"Yes; well, here are five thousand five hundred, so I'll be content with making a hundred to-night."

"This money I loan you on conditions."

"You are to take the two thousand you said, on the way here, you had received from your uncle, and use it as he directed."

"You are to pay back the five thousand dollars to take up your I. O. U. to the keeper, and then you are to invest the three thousand in a pretty schooner, which gives you one-fourth share in our business."

"One-fourth is owned by the captain, and one-fourth by the crew, I hold one half, so sell you half of that, and so you see we are arranged for."

"The schooner is known as the Storm Beacon, for she only appears off the coast in a storm, and she transfers her cargo to hiding-places and I send them to the city and sell them."

"Now it is dangerous work for me; but you have a pleasure craft, and often cruise alone; no one would suspect you, and going to the hiding-places in your runs you could bring them into port, and I could go by night in my boat to your yacht and transfer them to the farm on the coast where they can remain until sent up to town in the farmer's wagon."

"You see my plan, and it will pay you from five hundred to six hundred dollars every time our schooner brings a cargo off-shore, and she makes half a dozen runs a year."

"What do you say, Captain Carr?"

"I can but yield to the temptation you offer, and thank you for having helped me out of a very black-looking scrape," was the answer.

"You are wise, for our business may some day lead to something better," was the significant reply, and the two men thus strangely met, took another drink to the success of their lawless enterprise.

CHAPTER XIII.

A RESCUE.

UPON a low point of land which formed the other arm of the inlet, that flowed in around Overland Cliff, stood a log cabin.

It was three-quarters of a mile from the cliff, the width of the inlet at its mouth, where the fine harbor of M— began.

The point was of rocks, but low, and it was covered by a dense growth of small pines.

In among these the cabin stood, completely hidden, and protected by them from the cold winds from sea and land.

The cabin had two rooms in it, and a covered way along the front, which served as a piazza, or shelter at least.

The rooms were plainly furnished, one used as a sleeping room, the other as a kitchen, and work-shop.

In the rear of the house was a small vegetable garden, a couple of score of chickens roamed about the place, and a large black dog, and a savage-looking white cat lay in peaceful content upon fine straw beds evidently arranged for them.

Fishing nets, lines or other paraphernalia of a fisherman's craft, and a skiff and an oyster-boat were drawn up on a small bit of sandy beach on the inlet shore, while off at anchor lay a small smack of five tons, her sails neatly furled.

Swinging in a hammock among the pines was the master of this by no means uncomfortable home, and he was considered a man of consider-

able nerve to dwell as near as he had, for years, to the Overlook Cliff, where the ghosts of the murdered man and his wife were wont to be seen and heard of nights, for so said many people who professed to speak from actual experience.

This man in the hammock was Red Ralph, as he was called, partly from the belief that he had been engaged in a crime-stained career, as well as on account of his fiery red hair and beard.

Here at home he was not the exquisite the reader has seen in his room in Boston, but attired in plain sailor garb.

He was smoking a pipe and reading a book with seeming interest, but now and then looked through an opening in the pines over to Overlook Cliff where could be seen two forms seated upon a rustic settee near the edge of the rocks.

He had a glass in his hammock and now and then turned it upon the two.

"The girl is going to make a beautiful woman, and one to be proud of, while the boy is certainly as handsome as an Apollo, and is one to make a name for himself."

"How strange that they should cross my path again and in this quiet place; but I knew her the moment I saw her, and then it came back to me about the two children, although they have grown up since then."

"What can have brought them here, I wonder?"

"Ah! there comes the Harborage Hall sail-boat down the inlet, and Master Kenton has his pretty cruiser out for a sail, and he had better have a care in this squally weather."

"The girl is a fool to go out with him, for should the boat capsize, by accident, of course, and she be drowned, why it would just kill her old father, and that would leave Kenton Carr in full possession of the old man's large fortune, and he is none too good to bring about such a climax— By Heaven! I suspected it," and the man sprang from his hammock and rushed for the shore where his skiff lay.

The boat in question was a small cat-rig belonging to Harborage Hall, and she was under full sail, though it was blowing stiff and very squally, for a fierce squall would rush over the hills now and then and fairly churn the waters into foam as it passed along.

But Kenton Carr was a good sailor, and his cousin, very fond of an outing on the harbor, trusted herself with him without dread.

They had run up past the town, and rounding the cliff, to sail up the inlet, for Kenton had suggested that they go by to get a look at the mysterious dwellers in the Overlook Cottage, and who had now been living there nearly a year.

Ethel Carr had been glad to get a look at the weird spot and the strange trio, so had consented to go by, with real pleasure at the thought.

She was about seventeen, and there was not a dweller in the town but had said, men, women and children alike, that she was the most beautiful girl that had ever crossed their paths in life, and a lovable one too.

After the coming of Kate Sweegan to dwell in the cottage on the cliff, there were some who were divided in their opinion as to whether she was not equally as lovely as was Ethel Carr, a few asserting that the mysterious maiden of the Haunted Cottage was even more lovely, and so it was the maid of Harborage Hall found a rival in the unknown beauty, whose mother had now become known as the Sorceress of the Cliff.

Having a desire to see this lovely rival, Ethel had willingly accepted her cousin's invitation to sail up by the cliff, though it certainly looked dangerous to do so with the cat-boat carrying full sail.

But Kenton would not reef, and so held on, until just as they rounded the cliff a fierce squall swept over the hills and down upon the little craft, which seemed not to be able to stand it an instant, for over she went, and Ethel Carr was hurled into the caldron of waters, while Kenton Carr was dragged along some distance with the boat, and seemingly unable to aid her.

A cry broke from the young girl's lips, and she gave up all hope for life, and as a prayer was uttered, raised her eyes heavenward, to suddenly behold a man's form in the air, coming over the cliff.

Down like an arrow he shot, and disappeared beneath the waves, just as Ethel sunk for the first time.

When she rose she did not see the bold rescuer near her, but heard his cheering voice:

"Have no fear, miss, for I will reach you."

But she could not support herself, and once more sunk beneath the waves, to rise and feel a strong arm thrown about her waist, and again hear the cheery voice:

"Now you are all right, for there comes my

sister to our aid," and he glanced toward a skiff just shooting out from the shore, and the one who held the oars was Kate Sweegan.

"But oh, sir, my cousin will drown," cried Ethel, anxiously, looking at the upturned cat-boat, some distance away.

"He has the boat to cling to, and is perfectly safe, I assure you; but I will see to him when you are safe," was the answer, and Clifford swam leisurely, but with strong stroke to meet the coming skiff, and seemingly did not mind the precious weight he carried.

In a minute more the skiff was at hand, and seizing the gunwale, Clifford said:

"Draw the lady in, Kate, while I help you."

This Kate did, and then seizing the oars, said: "There is some one clinging to the boat, Clifford."

"Yes, we will go to his aid now, though his own awkwardness capsized the boat, and a man who knows so little of seamanship should never endanger lives as he did by going out sailing."

"Oh, sir, my cousin is said to be a splendid sailor!" cried Ethel.

"I only judge by what I saw, miss; but, see! he is in no danger, for he is clinging to the boat all right."

"But can he not swim?"

"Oh, yes, sir, he is a fine swimmer, but let me tell you, now that I have caught my breath, how more than grateful I am to you, for I owe you my life, and my deepest gratitude to this lovely girl also."

"But for you I would now be dead," and the lovely eyes filled with tears.

"I am happy in having saved you, Miss Carr, for I take you to be Miss Ethel Carr, as that is the Harborage Hall boat."

"Yes, I am Ethel Carr, and had I been drowned, it would have broken my dear old father's heart; but here we are at the boat," and she said no more as Kate, who was rowing, swung the skiff around for her brother to help Kenton Carr who was clinging to the boat, his face very pale.

"You are just in time, for I have a severe cramp, and you were so slow in coming," he said petulantly.

"My sister is a rapid rower, sir, and she did her best," coldly replied the young sailor, as he grasped the arms of Kenton Carr and drew him over the stern of the skiff.

"For shame, Cousin Kenton, for you owe your life, as I do, to this gentleman and his sister," cried Ethel, indignant at his words.

"Well, an instant more, and I would have let go; but don't you see, fellow, that my legs are all entangled in the sheet-rope?"

"Let me untangle them for you, sir," and alongside came the skiff of Red Ralph, who had rowed rapidly to the rescue.

"Ah, Ralph! it is you?"

"Yes, my feet are all in the snarl of the sheet-rope, and but for that I could readily have saved my cousin; but this fine fellow here, and his pretty sister, have helped us out of what looked at one time like an ugly scrape."

"They have saved our lives, Cousin Kenton, and I appreciate it, for I was sinking the last time when this gentleman reached my side, and your face was livid and you were giving up when he seized you; and but for the splendid rowing of this beautiful girl we never would have reached you in time," and Ethel spoke with indignant anger, for her cousin's words and manners she was determined to rebuke.

"Nonsense, Ethel! It was not as bad as that."

"It was just that bad, Master Kenton, for I saw it all, and I never beheld a more daring leap than you made, sir, from the cliff."

"That is forty feet high, and few men would risk it, while, miss, if you had not run down and come out in your skiff, Master Kenton here would now be food for the fishes, for he is as cold as an icicle now and would have let go."

"There, this snarl is out at last, and it was as tight about your legs, Master Kenton, as though tied there," and the sheet rope was released from about the ankles of the young man, who said:

"I'll leave the boat, Ralph, for you to tow ashore and right, when you can bring it to me, and I will hire this young man to row us up to the hall wharf."

"Thank you, Mr. Carr, but I am not a boatman to hire out, but I will be glad to sail you home in my sloop, after this young lady and yourself have changed your wet clothes, and had a stimulant, for the water is very cold and you will both be ill if you do not put on dry clothing."

"Thank you, I'll accept your offer, for Ethel is as blue as indigo, and if you have any liquor

it will do us both good," and Kenton Carr spoke in a very condescending tone, which caused Ethel to bite her lips in a vexed way.

"Give me the oars, Kate, for I need warming up," said Clifford, and he sent the boat flying homeward.

Landing they walked hastily up to the cabin, and taking Ethel to her room Kate gave her dry clothing, while Clifford did the same for Kenton Carr, at the same time calling to his sister to give them all a glass of brandy.

"This is splendid brandy, my man, such as I had not expected to find here," said Kenton Carr as he dashed the drink down with a swallow.

Clifford made no reply, and Kenton Carr continued, as he dressed himself in the dry clothing put out for him:

"You wear fine clothes, too, above your station in life, for though a sailor suit, they are of the finest material, all even finer than mine."

"I am glad they please you, sir, and if you will excuse me I will go and get up sail on my sloop to take you home."

"When ready, pray come down to the shore with your cousin, and my sister will bring you out to the Wave Witch, as I call my little vessel," and Clifford left the cabin and was soon on board the sloop, where half an hour after he was joined by Kenton Carr and his cousin, whom Kate rowed out in her skiff.

"Anchor your skiff, Kate, and go with us," said Clifford, and she seemed glad of the chance, and away sped the pretty sloop out of the inlet on her way to Harborage Hall.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE COMMODORE IN A RAGE.

THE breeze was, as I have before said, blowing strong, and the harbor was rough, while an occasional squall made it dangerous sailing.

And yet Clifford Sweegan had not taken a reef in his sail, and sent the sloop flying along at a pace that even brought an expression of admiration from Kenton Carr upon her fleetness.

Squalls struck them, but the skilled helmsman met them well, and he knew just what his sloop could do.

Ethel Carr looked very beautiful in one of Kate's picturesque suits and fez caps, and it fitted her faultless form to perfection, though a trifle short, which, however, but revealed her very pretty feet and neat ankles.

She had been surprised to find that the clothing of the supposed poor girl matched her own, even surpassed them in fineness of texture and beauty; but she was too well bred to make comment upon the fact.

She had, like all others, stood in awe of the mysterious family, and had been rather glad that the "Sorceress," as Mrs. Sweegan was known, was absent in the town during their presence at her house, having gone there on foot on some errand of her own.

In truth, the woman rather enjoyed the awe she inspired, and had been given to fortune-telling, which but increased the powers she was supposed to possess by many persons of a supernatural order.

If Clifford or Kate felt chagrined at her going to the village, and indulging in "fortune-telling," not a word against it did they utter to her.

When the sloop was bounding along on its five-mile run down the harbor to the wharf of Harborage Hall, Ethel Carr for the first time had an opportunity for a good look at her daring rescuer, as he sat at the helm.

She had already discovered that Kate was no ordinary person, and had fairly fallen in love with the little fairy-like maid, who had been so sweet to her, and so brave too.

Her cousin had taken a seat near Kate, her beauty seeming now to strike him, and he was trying to make himself agreeable to her, so Ethel moved nearer to the young helmsman, who had been sailing his vessel seemingly unmindful of her earnest gaze.

She had seen a man of splendid physique, a face to admire, respect and love, and she felt drawn toward the one who had risked his own life in that splendid leap and hard swim to save her from a watery grave.

In her frank, sweet way she laid her hand softly upon his arm and said earnestly:

"Let me again tell you, sir, that I am so appreciative of your noble rescue of me, and will ever regard you as a friend."

"I feel honored, Miss Carr, by your kind words, and shall appreciate your friendship I assure you; but our paths through life go different ways, and we may never meet again."

"Yet I am glad, very glad to have served you."

"Then why may we not be friends if you appreciate my regard, sir?"

"As I said, our lives run different ways, for you dwell in your elegant home, admired and beloved by all, while my mother, my sister and myself are—well, little more than Sea Gypsies, for we have roamed about a great deal, and the home we have now is a humble one, while though we injure no one, we are regarded with suspicion by all and hated by many."

"No, our friendship, born of the lucky chance I had in being near to serve you, can be but a hollow mockery."

He spoke almost bitterly, and Ethel dropped her eyes before his earnest gaze, while she said, after a moment:

"My friendship for you, and your sweet sister, shall be no hollow mockery, Mr. Sweegan, as perhaps some day you will be willing to admit."

"But let me congratulate you upon your skill as a sailor, for I never saw any one handle a vessel as you do."

The last she added quickly, as though to change the subject, for she felt that perhaps she had said too much, though she had only given utterance to words her feelings dictated.

"May I ask a favor of you, Miss Carr?" asked Clifford, in answer to her praise of his sailing.

"Certainly, and I grant it before its purport is known."

"Thank you; but though I do not know the feeling existing between your cousin and myself, and I may offend you, the favor I would ask is that you never again intrust yourself to his care in sailing."

"As I said, I grant it, for it is just what I never intended to do after my experience to-day, but—"

She paused, and her face flushed and paled, and seeing that he awaited for her to say more, she continued, in a lower tone:

"Will you tell me your motive for asking this?"

"You referred to your cousin as a good sailor, and I have heard that he has commanded vessels, so that, as I was watching him sail the cat-rig to-day, I can only say that he was either criminally reckless, or—"

"Or what, Mr. Carr?"

"Or intentionally so, and I say this with full permission for you to tell him my views of his upsetting that boat to-day."

"No! no! I will not tell him, but I will heed your warning, for such it is and you are a man who mean just what you say, and I thank you—no, no, Kenton must never know you opened my eyes to the truth, for I really now believe—but I will say no more—only *I thank you again*," and she sprung up and joined her cousin and Kate, the latter having gone forward ready to haul down the jib, for Clifford intended to run in alongside of the wharf.

The commodore had seen the sloop heading for his wharf, and had walked down to meet, as he believed, visitors, and recognizing his daughter and nephew as the sloop drew nearer he hailed with:

"Ahoy, you runaways! you found the wind too much for you in the cat-rig so had to charter a sloop to come home in—ah! well done, young sir, for you handle a craft in a way that delights my old sailor heart," and the commodore added the last to Clifford at his skillful manner of bringing his sloop alongside of the wharf against many difficulties, for Kenton's yacht was anchored right in the way, and also two fishing-smacks, which made it a pretty piece of seamanship, to make a landing as he did.

"No, no, you are not going to run off that way, sir," cried Ethel, as she saw that it was Clifford's intention to cast off at once, and she continued:

"Father, this gentleman and his sister saved my life and that of Cousin Kenton, for we capsized in the cat-rig right off the Overlook Cliff, and to rescue us he boldly sprang from the cliff into the sea and seized me as I was sinking for the last time, while this brave young lady rowed out in her skiff and picked us all up."

The old commodore, who had never paled in battle, now grew white as a sheet at the danger his daughter had been in, and said in a voice that trembled, as he grasped the young sailor's hand:

"My young friend, a father's heart goes out to you, and to this beautiful girl for your brave deed this day."

"Your name even I do not know, but you shall never be forgotten by old Caleb Carr as long as life remains to him."

"God bless you, my son, God bless you both," and the eyes of the old commodore filled with tears.

"Why, uncle, it was not so terrible as Ethel would have you believe, and instead of gushing thanks I would pay the young fellow handsomely and let him go, for he didn't risk his life without the hope of a liberal reward."

Kenton Carr regretted the words the moment he uttered them, for the indignant cry came from Ethel's lips:

"For shame, Kenton Carr! for shame upon you for such cowardly words!"

"Silence, sir, and don't you dare speak to me, or my child again, or cross the threshold of my home until you have asked that splendid man there to forgive your words, called up by envy because you placed your cousin's life in danger and were unable to save her."

"Do you hear, sir?"

The commodore was livid now with anger, and never before had his nephew seen him so moved, and the young spendthrift was anxious to make amends and check his anger, which could but end most disastrously for him, so he said hastily:

"I beg your pardon, my man, most heartily for my words, and yours, too, Miss Kate, for I cannot recall your other name, as my uncle and cousin seem to think I have said something terrible, when I only meant to give the commodore a hint to reward you."

Kate had uttered no word, but glanced at her brother a trifle anxiously, Ethel thought; but Clifford was perfectly cool and replied:

"Mr. Kenton Carr, I neither sought reward, nor would I take one, nay I am amply well provided with riches for all our wants, and more, I will not accept your forced pardon any more than I would resent an insult from a man of your caliber."

"Good! you got a bull broadside that time, you insolent fellow," cried the commodore, and as if to prevent the irate old gentleman from saying more, Clifford added quickly:

"Commodore Carr, I honor you, sir, as a man who won fame as the bravest of the brave in his country's service, and my reward is in having served you and your daughter."

"Good-afternoon," and Clifford quickly let go the line he held and his sloop fell away under the pressure of the wind, for he stood upon his own deck.

"You have dodged my further thanks, young man, but we will meet again, and my blessing go with you both," called out the commodore.

Clifford raised his tarpaulin, and Kate having hauled up the jib, waved her hand in farewell as the sloop bent to the breeze and went flying away seaward.

CHAPTER XV.

BROUGHT TO TERMS.

It was very evident to Kenton Carr that the old commodore was intensely angry with him.

The commodore liked the young man, had done so from his boyhood, and tried to do his duty by him as his guardian and the holder of his estate.

But he never saw the petty character of the young man revealed often, and knew him not as he really was.

That he was wild, reckless, impatient, he knew, and haughty to his inferiors but the spirit shown by Kenton against the young sailor who had saved his life, he was surprised at, and it pained him.

So he said, as the sloop sailed away and Kenton made some remark.

"Kenton, I am very much displeased with you, and unless you wish an outbreak which both may regret you will go to your room until I feel in a different mood from what I now do."

The young man dared not disobey; he saw that his uncle was aroused, and so with a cold bow he walked rapidly away toward the Hall, several hundred yards distant, and situated upon the hill that commanded a fine view of the town a mile away, the harbor and the distant sea.

"My child, tell me your story of this affair," said the commodore, as the young man walked away.

"It is soon told, father, as far as the acts of Kenton and I are concerned, but the deeds of that noble young man and beautiful maiden are beyond all words to express."

"Kenton has urged me of late to go sailing with him, and this evening I accepted, and he suggested running up to Overlook Cliff and have a look at the cabin and its mysterious occupants."

"It was blowing fresh, and very squally, and when we got off the cliff, and close in, a squall

swept down upon the boat and she was knocked down so that I was thrown out into the sea, while she drove on for a short distance and then capsized.

"I had seen two persons seated upon a bench on the cliff, and the moment I fell overboard they arose, one leaping from the cliff into the sea and swimming toward me, and the other disappearing.

"The leaper was the young sailor, Clifford Sweegan."

"My God! the cliff is nearly half a hundred feet in height."

"Yes, sir, and yet he made it with seeming ease and soon grasped me about the waist just as I was sinking for the last time, and was perfectly conscious.

"Then I saw his sister, who had run down the cliff path to her skiff, rowing rapidly toward us.

"She took us in and we went to the aid of Kenton, whose feet were entangled in the sheet-rope, and who had been seized with a cramp, so was very pale, trembling and just on the eve of letting go his hold when Mr. Sweegan caught hold of him.

"A moment after the man known as Red Ralph came up, and helped to disentangle the sheet-rope, while he praised the leap the young sailor had made.

"From the very first Kenton was disagreeable, and Mr. Sweegan quietly put up with his ill-humored remarks, and carried us to his home, where he supplied my cousin with dry wear, and his lovely sister gave me her clothing to put on, and is it not beautiful?"

"Yes, and most becoming, my child; but I supposed these people were poor, as their mother is said to be a fortune-teller."

"Yes, father, but she never takes pay for her fortune-telling, it is said, and people are unable to find out how she lives; but she must be rich, and only eccentric, while her children certainly appear to be well raised."

"We will not be the ones to criticise them, Ethel, after the debt we owe them."

"The young man's appearance at once checked me in speaking of a reward for his services, and it was cruel in Kenton to say what he did."

"The boy does not please me, and I will have to be more severe with him than I have been."

"But, about these good people on the cliff?"

"Yes, father."

"I must go and call on them, and we will drive there to-morrow, for there was a drive-way years ago leading to the cliff."

"I think there must be now, sir," said Ethel, and her face flushed guiltily, as she knew that there was, for she and a lady friend in the village had ridden to the cottage on the cliff, a few weeks before, to have their "fortunes told."

The Sorceress was there alone, for both Clifford and Kate were off sailing, and the two maidens had been welcomed in a cold, haughty manner, but in a perfectly well-bred way, which showed that Mrs. Sweegan was no ordinary person.

They had been impressed by her manner, had been invited into her room, where she told them of the past and the future, and then offering them a glass of wine and some delicious cake, had refused all pay for her services.

Ethel had intended to tell her father of her visit, but he had that very night opened upon fortune-telling as a fraud, and those who went to them as fools, and so she wisely kept her own secret for another time.

Now, however, feeling guilty of keeping something from him, she made a confession of her visit, and told him all, and just why she had not done so the night following the trip to the Cliff Cottage with her friend.

The commodore did not scold, and when he heard from Ethel how the Sorceress was fairly covered with gems of rare value, he said:

"Then these people do not need money, so in some other way we must repay this debt we owe them, for what would my home be without you, my child?"

"My God! I dare not think of it; and it angers me the more to think of that scamp Kenton getting you into such danger and then acting in such a rude manner to the man who had saved your life and his."

That night Kenton did not come down to supper, and both the commodore and Ethel seemed glad of it, and the old sailor seemed to be almost unwilling to have his daughter leave his side for a minute.

The next morning Kenton appeared at breakfast, and the cloud had left his brow, for he had discovered that the commodore was in a very dangerous mood, and he was compelled to humble his pride before him.

So he came in with a smiling face, and a

heart that was bitter in its fury, and said pleasantly:

"My sweet cousin, I congratulate you upon your having suffered no ill effects from your mishap of yesterday, as you are looking bright and cheery this morning."

"And uncle, I must ask you to forgive and forget my rude manner of yesterday, for I deeply regret what occurred, and can only account for it by my feeling chagrined at having placed my sweet cousin in such danger, and then have her rescued by another."

"I am truly sorry, sir."

"All right, my boy, it's all forgotten; but you were intensely rude, and I really think owe amends to that gallant young sailor also."

"I shall see him, sir," was the response, and Kenton Carr sat down to his breakfast, not at all liking the cool manner in which his cousin had received his complimentary apology.

After breakfast the carriage was ordered, and the commodore asked Kenton if he cared to go with them, but he excused himself by saying that Red Ralph was in sight with the cat-rig in tow, and he would go down to the wharf and see if the boat was injured, and pay the man for his services.

"Yes, yes, and he came to your rescue, too, Ethel says, but arrived too late to be of much service, yet is deserving of reward."

"Here, Kenton, take him these bank-notes from me, and there are a hundred dollars in the roll."

"I will, sir," and the young man took the money and started upon his way to the shore, which Red Ralph had now reached with the cat-boat in tow, while Commodore Carr and Ethel entered the family carriage and were driven off for their visit to the mysterious trio of the Haunted Cottage.

CHAPTER XVI.

RED RALPH'S LECTURE.

WHEN Kenton Carr reached the Harborage Hall wharf, he found there Red Ralph, calmly smoking his pipe, and seated in the little boat-house making himself comfortable.

"Well, Captain Carr, you had a close call yesterday," he said quietly.

"Yes, but you have brought my boat, I see."

"Yes, you ordered me yesterday to do so, and of course, as Red Ralph is simply a poor fisherman, it would not have done for me to refuse the chance of good pay for righting and bringing the cat-rig home, so here's your craft."

"I won't use her again, that is certain."

"Why?"

"Well, she is so cranky."

"Now, I rather like the craft, so what will you take cash for her?"

"Whatever she is worth to you, as you righted her and put her in shape again."

"The boat is not hurt, but I'll give you fifty dollars."

"It's a bargain, though she cost me a couple of hundred half a year ago."

"Well, your uncle had her built for you, so you are fifty dollars in pocket; but here is the money, and I guess you will have to pay out well for your life and that of your cousin, which that gallant fellow saved."

"Do you know, though I would not say so to him or to others, I was about gone when he seized me?"

"I know it."

"An accursed cramp completely upset me, and then the sheet-rope hampered me."

Red Ralph laughed, and the young man asked with show of anger:

"What do you see to laugh at?"

"The sheet-rope."

"Well?"

"Well?"

"See here, Red Ralph, what do you mean?"

"My dear Carr, don't get angry, for there must be no quarrel between you and I, as neither would like the result."

"I do not understand what you are driving at."

"Then I will explain to you just what I mean, for I do not wish the same game to be played twice."

"In Satan's name what do you mean?"

"To begin with, your cousin is one of the loveliest of girls—"

"We are not discussing her, sir."

"We are, for in spite of the bad character I bear, when no one else came near me, at the time I was so ill, half a year ago, she drove up in her carriage one day, and had the footman ask how I was, and then bring in a basket of most tempting things, with wine and medicines too, along with a pair of soft blankets, a feather pillow and

an easy-chair, in fact all that she could think of to make me comfortable."

"Now that is her nature, and I am not one to go back on her, for I'd risk my life any day to serve her."

"Well, what has all this got to do with me?"

"Just this, that I untangled you from the sheet-rope, and you had tied yourself up on purpose, to have an excuse not to go to her aid."

"This is false!"

"I was watching you, and I saw how recklessly you sailed, and when the squall struck you, not a foot of sheet did you let off, nor did you bring her up to meet it."

"The rope was tangled, and—"

"Just what I said; the rope was tangled *before* the squall struck you, and you expected the heeling of the boat to throw your cousin out, which it did, and you had no idea that you would be seized with a cramp, but could hold on the boat until rescued, and the sheet-rope about your legs would be excuse enough for you not to go to the aid of that poor drowning girl."

"Red Ralph, you lie! you lie!" almost shrieked the young man, his face now pallid with rage.

"Don't apply harsh terms to me for I do not like them, and, as I said before, it will not do for us to quarrel."

"But I saw what I say, and I believe, by Heaven, that that young sailor also saw it, for he is no fool, as I know well."

"It is false!"

"It is true, and because you are driven to the wall, you sought her death."

"She is heiress to a very large fortune, which in case of her death you would get."

"Her death would kill the commodore as certain as you stand there, for she is his idol, and if it did not, a little poison might help along, and you would then hide the fact from him that your inheritance is mortgaged, and get a very large fortune, with Harborage Hall to dwell in."

"Now you loved your cousin, but she does not love you, and will not marry you, so you are revengeful toward her as well as desirous of getting her riches, and it seemed so easy to drown her and no fault laid at your door."

"Now that young girl is not to die thus, and I say what I do to give you fair warning, for if she does go off in any way except by a natural death, then, if I hang for it, I will hang you."

"Now keep silence, for curses and bad names do not alter the situation, and we must understand each other better, and if you are in pressing need, why I have to help you out, that is all."

"I am in need, for I have another note out; but let me first tell you how wrong you are to suspect me so cruelly as you do."

"Now that is settled, so don't say any thing more about it, Kenton, but tell me about this note."

"What do you wish to know?"

"How much is it for?"

"One thousand dollars."

"Who holds it?"

"A man the landlord recommended, for I did not wish to call upon you."

"Very well, let us look at the situation coolly."

"We have been partners now for over a year, and you began by owing me a few thousands, and have never paid a note I first let you have money on."

"Now, our smuggling has paid handsomely and in your sloop-yacht you have done your duty well, and not a shadow of suspicion falls upon you."

"Our sales amount—our share, I refer to, not including the captain and his crew, to just seventeen thousand dollars, making eight thousand five hundred received by you from me."

"Now, my dear Kenton, your uncle allows you two thousand more, and all this money you have squandered in riotous living, not paying me my debts, and owing me one thousand more."

"You, one thousand more?"

"Yes, for I was the supposed stranger you got the money from that night in the hotel."

"I had a white wig on, my beard whitened, my nose made hooked by a little putty and a pair of spectacles, so made up a very good Jew, you see."

"The devil!"

"No, yours truly, Red Ralph, for I do not aspire to the honor of being his Satanic Majesty, at least just yet."

"Now this note of yours, has your uncle's indorsement upon it, as bad the other, so that makes it good, and I don't mind holding it as I have the first one, so do not trouble yourself about paying it, and in conclusion let me ask you to be less reckless in your gambling, and your career."

"You never win anything, for if luck comes to you, you fight on for more and lose all and more too."

"Now, Kenton, some one will yet let your uncle know all, so be quiet in your living and give him no cause for complaint."

"Now you don't need any money, except to gamble, as you do not have to pay this note just now, so you will have to wait until I am paid for the last cargo sent in."

"When will that be?"

"Thirty days."

"I must have money before then."

"Ask your uncle for it then."

"Not I."

"Then you must do without, and now let me have your attention, for I have something to tell you of importance, and there is money in it, I think, if properly managed."

"I am with you, Ralph, in anything to make money," was the eager reply of the young prodigal.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN EX-PIRATE.

"WELL, Ralph, what is your plan to get gold?" asked Kenton Carr, as he saw the sailor quietly light his pipe and resume his seat with the air of a man who was in no hurry to communicate what he knew.

As for Kenton Carr he was all curiosity and impatience, and he only wished to grasp at some more gold.

Had he received ten times the very liberal sum which his uncle allowed him, and which his secret smuggling operations brought him in, it would have been the same, for his mania for gambling was his ruin.

He played blindly, recklessly, and was a pigeon the gamblers loved to pluck, and whenever he entered a saloon where gaming went on all who knew him felt sure that he would go out a large loser.

Of course it caused comment to those who figured up his losses, taken into consideration with his extravagant mode of life, and it was supposed that his fortune must have been enormous.

He was known to keep his yacht, his horses and live extravagantly when he came to the city, as he did half a dozen times a year, and that he could keep this page up much longer many doubted.

It was just a question of time and the depth of his purse they all knew.

He was fond of plunging, anxious to appear like a fast man, and pretended to utter indifference to money.

When losing heavily he was utterly unconcerned in appearance, though mentally in dread of coming evil and cursing his luck with every turn of the card against him.

But for Red Ralph he would have gone to the wall long before, and that strange character, a contradiction of good and evil, knew Kenton Carr perfectly, and more, kept him in awe of him.

He was the young man's master, and Kenton Carr dare not break the chains that held him in check as the sailor's very slave.

Aware that the sailor would not enter upon any plan unless it paid well, he again asked, in his impatience:

"Come, Ralph, tell me what you have on hand?"

"You are to keep the secret as your own?"

"Yes."

"You swear it?"

"I do."

"Very well, bear your oath in mind, and at the same time do not forget the fact that as I am the only one who knows the secret, and you the only one that I am to tell it to, that if a whisper of it goes abroad on the winds, I know just where it leaked out, and I would silence you as surely as my name is deservedly Red Ralph, and I won the name before it was given to me here."

"What would be my motive in telling?"

"No man can read another's motive under varying circumstances, and I only warn you not to tell what I am going to say to you."

"You have my oath."

"I shall remember it."

"But to my story, Kenton."

"I am all attention."

"I don't think that I have ever been very communicative about my past life."

"No, on the contrary."

"Well, I don't mind telling you that once I was a pirate."

"A pirate?"

"Yes, for you see I left the navy because I

lost my temper and resented the insult of my superior officer."

"I challenged him and he refused to fight a midshipman, so I resigned, and as they had found me a splendid sailor, though I say so myself, they refused to accept my resignation."

"But my temper got the best of me, and I deserted the ship, was dismissed in disgrace and then outlawed with orders to shoot me when captured."

"I however was biding my chance and one night met the lieutenant whom I had the trouble with."

"He had been refused by my sister, and then attempted to blacken her fair fame, and that was the cause of our quarrel."

"He was in company with one other, an officer, and I had half a dozen hired men with me, so the odds were in my favor, and I forced him to fight a duel with me, and, I killed him."

"Of course that made me more than ever an outcast, and I went to the Mediterranean as a foremast hand of a clipper ship, and thus drifted about until I found myself upon a pirate schooner."

"Turned pirate, eh?"

"Yes, and I served under that arch fiend Bernard Bazil."

"He was an American, entered the service of Cartagena, turned his cruiser which they placed him in command of into a pirate, and thus won the name he did under the black flag."

"I was on board his schooner when he made a pirate of her; but to my story:

"This man Bazil met a young Southern girl, a planter's daughter, and he being a handsome, dashing fellow, just the one to fascinate a woman, she loved him to desperation and eloped with him, for she did not believe him to be a pirate."

"But she soon discovered the truth, yet clung to him, after taking long cruises with him, and again living in a villa on the coast of Cuba near one of his secret haunts."

"For some years she disappeared, or rather was not seen by any of the crew, and then she came back to the schooner with two children, a boy and a girl."

"They were lovely children, and the boy soon became as expert as a monkey in going aloft, and when he was ten years of age the chief made him a midshipman."

A uniform was made for him, and he was as good an officer as many a man I have seen on the deck of a vessel-of-war."

"One night our vessel went in chase of a brig."

"The chief was in an ugly mood and had not been kind to his wife of late, and we all hoped the brig would prove a valuable prize so as to cheer him up, for he was a very Satan when in a bad humor."

"We chased the brig for hours, gaining gradually, until she at last opened upon us with two small guns astern."

"We held on rapidly, for it was rough, the breeze was freshening and a storm threatened to break upon us very soon."

"At last we ran alongside, grappels were thrown, and as the brig was supposed to have a good crew and a number of passengers who were determined to defend her, the chief boarded with four fifths of his men."

"As she reached her decks the storm suddenly broke upon us, the two vessels were snapped apart, and a terrible fire was poured upon us."

"Then, to our horror, we discovered that the brig had entrapped us, pretending to be a merchant craft, when in reality she was an American cruiser."

"The chief was wild with rage, and rallied us around him to fight it out. I was second officer then, of the schooner, the Red Scorpion, and I saw at a glance that we were doomed, for the first fire of the brig had hurt us hard."

"The schooner had gone driving away before the gale, with sail enough to run her under, and was lost sight of, and the crew of the brig were rushing upon us and outnumbering us largely."

"But we fought desperately, and, as I got near the chief I whispered to him that I meant to play the pirate prisoner, and then I could help him escape if we were taken."

"He nodded assent, and I dropped back among the fighters in the rear, and feeling that the game was against us, for our men had suffered fearfully, I began to tell them to throw down their arms, and perhaps mercy would be shown."

"I was careful that the officers and men of the brig should see me do this, and the result was that, ten minutes after, all were in irons below except myself, and I was in the captain's cabin telling him how I had been captured on an American vessel and forced to join the pirates,

and, as my actions had been seen, and the chief admitted that I was not a sea outlaw, I just had things my own way."

"Red Ralph, you are a perfect devil for wickedness."

"Thank you; I appreciate the compliment. Birds of a feather flock together, you know, my dear Kenton," was the smiling rejoinder.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RED RALPH'S SECRET.

"WELL, Mate Kenton," resumed the sailor, "I wish to tell you the rest of my story—my secret, in fact."

"Is it not your secret that you were a pirate?"

"Oh, no; something better far than that."

"I should hate to confess such a secret to any man."

"Bah! what harm is there in it, for what could you do now that you know it?"

"It is a great power to hold against you."

"Bah! It is only your story of my guilt, while I have proof of yours, so don't think you have any hold upon me, my dear fellow, as you have not the slightest."

"Now let me go on and tell you the secret I meant to, and which my story led up to."

"I am listening."

"I told the captain of the brig how I had been treated by the pirates, and I was quite a hero, I assure you, and, seeing that I had been reared a gentleman, I was invited into the cabin as the commander's guest."

"The men were in irons below, so did not know of my little game. The chief was given a berth in the wardroom and heavily ironed also, and it was to his interest to acknowledge my innocence so that I could help him escape, don't you see?"

"Yes."

"The brig was put away in chase of the schooner, which, I said to the captain, had not over a dozen men on board of her, but I was careful to tell the wrong direction which they were likely to steer."

"The dead were thrown overboard and the wounded cared for, so that soon all the crew had to do was to look after the Scorpion."

"But, they never found her, and I felt certain that she had run under in the storm, or had capsized and all had been lost on board. Remember the chief's wife, and his two children were on board! in fact, the Buccaneer Middy was the only one to take command, as every other officer had followed the chief on board the brig."

"So they were lost?"

"Don't anticipate my story, Master Kenton, for I shall come to the climax in good time."

"Of course they meant to hang the captain and all of the crew, upon reaching port, and what I did for the chief I knew I must do promptly, though had I no chance to help him I knew that it was my duty to make my escape as soon as I could do so."

"We reached the port of Charleston in good time, and I found that it was utterly impossible to do anything on board the brig for the chief, so I thanked the captain for his kindness, told him I was anxious to get back to my family, who must believe me dead, and then I took my leave."

"But, I had recognized among the crew a coxswain who had once served with me, and whom I knew to have killed a comrade, so that he dared not betray me."

"I bade him come up into the town and see me, and when he did so, that night, I gave him a few hundred dollars, for I had all my wealth with me in gold and jewels, and told him if he would aid the chief to escape that he could count on as much more from him."

"That very night he did get the chief off, and the camp allowed the blame to fall upon another man who was shot for it."

"Where the chief went I do not know, but of course the present Buccaneer Bazil must be he, for who else could he be?"

"But, to return to myself:

"I had had all the danger I cared for, so determined to lead a less risky life and sought a place where I could settle down and do a little smuggling."

"My jewels bought for me a vessel, and a man I had once well known went as captain and thus I began my smuggling work, which has paid well, I assure you, and as you pretty well know."

"But this secret you were to tell me!"

"I am coming to it now:

"You remember that I said the schooner was supposed to be lost?"

"Yes."

"Well, she was not."

"How do you know?"
 "Well, if she was lost three persons who were on board of her escaped."

"Ah!"

"Yes, and they are not far away."

"Who are they?"

"The chief's wife, his daughter and the Buccaneer Midshipman."

"By Heaven! you mean the Sorceress and her two children?"

"Just so."

"This is glorious! glorious!"

"Calm yourself, my dear Kenton, for this is my secret, you know."

"Go on."

"The woman has changed in the years that have passed since then, for she was very beautiful in those days, but now she is handsome, a weird kind of beauty."

"The little girl, then, is now nearly a woman, and a very lovely one, as you have seen."

"And the boy?"

"Well, as a man, the Buccaneer Midshipman is simply a large edition of what he was as a boy."

"A handsomer, more manly little fellow I never saw, and he was as good a sailor, boy though he was, as any seaman on board the pirate craft."

"His father had taught him how to fence, and I have seen him disarm men, while he has often shot a bird that lighted in the rigging, for he seldom missed dead-center with his pistol."

"As for swimming, the boy was wont to jump overboard when we were at anchor, in the wildest seas, and he seemed to be a very fish in the water."

"Now, in the young man on the cliff you have my Boy Pirate, or, in other words, the Buccaneer Midshipman."

"You think there can be no mistake?"

"None whatever."

"Have they seen you?"

"Yes; but in those days my hair was cut close, and I wore no beard, so they would never know me."

"I hope there is no doubt as to their identity."

"Don't be over anxious, for look at the Sorceress, and see her jewels, while just take notice of the elegance with which they all dress."

"Have they any visible means of living, and yet how well they live, for they stint themselves in nothing."

"They came here in a sloop that is finer than the yacht of any gentleman yachtsman in Boston, and a mystery hangs over them."

"I guess you are right, Red Ralph."

"I know I am."

"But, what are you going to do about it?"

"Just this: that if they are saved, the schooner was not lost. If they got ashore, if she struck, they doubtless saved her treasure, and there was considerable in the Scorpion's chest."

"Of course there were a dozen of the crew on board, and they came in for their share; but the woman got the best of it by far. In fact, I should not wonder if she had vast riches now hidden away in her home."

"Red Ralph, you are a wonderful man."

"Yes, with a fortune in sight for you, I improve on acquaintance."

"But, can you get it?"

"I intend to try."

"How?"

"I shall let her know that I recognize her, and demand big pay for silence. If she refuses, then you must become their best friend, for you have the foundation in the Buccaneer Midshipman saving your life, and then you can watch and discover much that will be useful."

"If we cannot thus work together and get a handsome fortune out of the Buccaneer Middy, then I am much deceived."

"As I will be, for we can do it."

"But you try your plan of threatening to betray him first, if he does not pay well for your silence."

"I'll do it; but which had I best see?"

"The Buccaneer Middy, of course."

"I believe you are right, for I do not care to deal with the old woman, for she is too much like a witch nowadays, and folks tell strange stories of her weird powers."

"Half of them, if not all, started with that bully Abe Holly, who after spreading all the rumor he could, to make the people drive her off as a witch, was forced to leave town for fear that the young sailor, her son would kill him."

"Well, I guess he would do so; but still I shall try and arrange my plans with the boy, and he will come to terms if I make threats against his mother and sister."

"Yes, I guess you are right, Ralph."

"I know I am, and it is only when that fails, that we must see what can be done, for they have the schooner's treasure I am sure, and we must get our share of it."

"I am with you, for if ever man needed money I do, for, except the fifty you just handed me I have nothing," and the young spendthrift had his hand in his pocket then upon the roll of bills given him by his uncle for Red Ralph."

Soon after Red Ralph took his leave, going back in his new purchase and towing his own boat, and Kenton Carr returned to the mansion full of hope that good fortune was in store for him through the robbing of the Buccaneer Midshipman of his pirate treasure.

CHAPTER XIX.

A GAME THAT WAS LOST.

THE coachman on the box of the Harborage Hall carriage was in dire distress, when told by his master to drive to Overlook Cliff Cottage.

"Do yez mean the Haunted Hut, sur?"

"I do."

"That same where the witch lady is afther living, sur?"

"Yes."

"Yis, sur, I'll get there," and Pat drove off in great style.

But the horses seemed to grow very lazy as they turned off the main road into the unfrequented track that led to the cottage.

In fact, the Irishman purposely dilly-dallied, and at last stated that the tire of one of the wheels was loose, and he dared not go further.

"It's a short walk to the cottage, sur, and I'll wait for yez back in the main road, for I'm bel'avin' it best not to put weight on thim same wheels in this rocky path."

The commodore fully saw through Pat's cunning plan to avoid going to the cottage, as did Ethel also, so they dismounted from the vehicle and started on foot to make the eighth of a mile yet to go to reach the cottage.

They discovered, too, that Patrick lost no time in hastily driving back to the main road.

As the commodore came stumping along on his wooden leg, the sight that greeted the two villagers on coming in sight of the cottage was a pretty one.

The Sorceress was there, seated under a tree engaged in some needlework, and in a hammock near reclined Kate, while her brother sat near reading aloud to his mother and sister.

So engrossed were they in their reading, that they did not see the visitors until the commodore laughed to attract their attention.

They arose with no seeming embarrassment, and both Clifford and Kate advanced and welcomed them pleasantly, the young sailor presenting his mother to Ethel and then the commodore.

"My dear madam, I came with my daughter to thank in person your noble children for what they did yesterday, and you, as a mother, can fully appreciate all that a father can feel in having his only child saved from death."

The commodore spoke with feeling, and the Sorceress replied quietly:

"Yes, sir, I can feel what it would be to lose one of mine, for they are all I have to cling to in this world, and I am very glad that the mishap took place where it was in the power of Clifford and Kate to be of service."

"Ah, madam, but for the fact that Master Clifford was willing to dare more than most men, my child would have been drowned, for he took the leap from that cliff, in itself a daring feat and fearful risk of life."

"It was not such a feat, Commodore Carr for me to do, as often, when a boy I have leaped from aloft into the sea in sport, so you see I did not think much of the jump."

"You cannot make it seem the less in my eyes, Master Clifford, and I hope that our meeting thus through your courage will be the foundation of a sincere friendship between us, while I must beg of you to pardon the rudeness of my nephew, which is accounted for by the fact that having placed his cousin in danger of her life, you rescued her, and saved him also."

"Do not refer to it, sir, for I saw that Mr. Carr was in an ugly humor, so tried to pay no attention to his words, and surely I care to hold no ill-will against him," was the frank response.

Thus began a friendship between the commodore, a power in M—and the family of a woman who had been called witch and sorceress.

After a visit of full an hour the commodore and Kate took their leave, Clifford and Kate escorting them to their carriage to the great distress of Patrick, who eyed them curiously.

Returning to the cottage Clifford went down

on board of his sloop to see if all was shipshape, for the weather was threatening, and was just coming out of the cabin to row ashore when he heard a hail.

"Ho, young master, can I come aboard and have a word with you?"

It was Red Ralph, and he had taken his cat-rig home and seeing Clifford go out to his sloop, had sprung into his skiff and rowed rapidly across the inlet.

"Certainly, sir, come aboard," responded Clifford, politely, recognizing Red Ralph as a man he had often seen on the inlet, and who had come to the rescue the day before when Kenton Carr upset the cat-rig.

Red Ralph laid his skiff alongside, made the painter fast to the rail and sprung on board.

"That was a brave deed of yours yesterday, sir," he said, by way of opening the conversation.

"It looked so to those who may have seen it, and yet the leap was not so great and the swim a short one."

"You are modest, sir; but did you note the handling of the craft before she went over?"

"I thought she had an ignorant or awkward helmsman."

"Yes, and a man who should have known better too, for he has commanded ships."

Clifford made no reply, and Red Ralph, after a moment of silence, in which he seemed at a loss to know just how to begin his attack, said:

"May I ask you, sir, if we have not met before?"

"I saw you yesterday, yes, and have met you on the harbor, and several times in the town."

"No, I mean years ago."

"I think not."

"Will you tell me your name?"

"Certainly, Clifford Sweegan."

"Suppose I called you Clifford Basil, the Buccaneer Midshipman—what then?"

The man was disappointed, for the face of the young sailor did not change color, he did not even start, and replied coolly:

"Why should you call me by a name that is not mine?"

"See here, mate, you are a cool one, and I give you credit for about as much nerve as ever falls to the lot of man in this world; but you cannot deceive me, for I know you as the Buccaneer Midshipman, and your mother was the wife of Captain Basil the Pirate, and you and your sister are his children—see?"

"No, not as you wish me to, for you desire me to pay you gold to keep the secret?"

"You read my mind exactly, mate."

"Well, you are mistaken in your man, for I shall do no such thing."

"You confess then to being the son of Basil?"

"The Buccaneer chief is the only one I ever knew as my father."

"He is still living."

"So I have reason to believe."

"And you are the Buccaneer Midshipman?"

"I am not, but I was so called when I was a boy."

"Ah! and you refuse to pay me gold?"

"Why should I?"

"Your mother, your sister and yourself got the treasure that was upon the pirate schooner Red Scorpion?"

"Let me tell you something, my man."

"Go ahead."

"That schooner was wrecked and all on board were lost."

"How about you three?"

"We escaped from the schooner in a boat, while the men were coming, for I overheard their plot to kill us and take the treasure."

"We reached an island, and soon after, in a storm one night, the schooner drove upon the island and was wrecked, and not a soul escaped."

"Then we made our way to the mainland, and have been sea waifs ever since."

"And you did not get the treasure?"

"It is on the island, and I have even forgotten how to find the place."

"Your mother sports a great many jewels, I notice?"

"She does, for she brought off with her from the schooner some of the chief's special share."

"Well, if you are not willing to pay well for my silence, I will let it be known that you are pirates, all three of you, and the result will be that you will be hanged as the Buccaneer Midshipman, and your mother and sister will be sent to prison, if nothing more."

"See here, my man, if you are in distress, and desire aid, I will help you, for I never turn my back upon one in need; but let me show you a paper that may prove to you that I cannot be bullied into paying out gold on demand of any

villain that may have known me as the Buccaneer Midshipman in bygone years.

"It so happens that when coming in our little vessel that I ran into a lagoon, and it was near a buccaneer retreat.

"I saw lights ashore, landed and crept near, and thus discovered a plot to capture a fine schooner-of-war that had put into the lagoon below in distress, to make repairs.

"The buccaneers had two vessels, and they were getting their boats ready to attack just before dawn.

"I at once went to my boat, and as she was in a safe hiding-place, I rowed to the schooner, and reported to her captain, telling him I could pilot a boat expedition up the lagoon and surprise the buccaneers.

"This I did, they were surprised, routed and their camp and vessels captured, and I was given a paper from the captain which I presented in person to the President of the United States, when some year after we ran into the Potomac in our little craft.

"I told him who I was, and the paper I show you is a full pardon from the President for our acts of piracy, I being named in it as at one time the Buccaneer Midshipman.

"And more, I have a midshipman's berth, dated and signed, which gives me the right to enter the Navy of the United States at will, so you see that cancels my career as the Buccaneer Midshipman, and does away with any fear of betrayal at your hands.

"Is there anything more you would know, my friend, than that I have given up being a middy under the black flag, and shall serve in the same rank under the Stars and Stripes in the war that we are now on the eve of with England?"

Red Ralph smothered a curse and glanced at the paper shown him by the young sailor.

There it was, duly signed, sealed and delivered, and he could not doubt the evidence of his own sight.

He had played his cards and lost the game, and there was nothing for him to do but to get out of the affair as gracefully as possible.

So he said:

"Master Clifford, I congratulate you upon your good luck; but it would be well if you did not let it be known that your mother was Pirate Basil's wife, and you and your sweet sister were his children.

"It would look bad in spite of the pardon, and folks would make it very unpleasant for your mother and sister."

"I agree with you, and I do not care to have it known; but when you showed that you knew us, I would not be robbed of such a large sum simply to have the secret kept, so told you what I did."

"But it is not a large sum that I want."

"What do you wish?"

"I am a poor man, sir, and I need money, and you are rich, very rich, for the chief I remember had quite a sum in precious stones, for I often saw them."

"Ah! you were an officer then, and now that I look at you memory brings back your face and I will tell you your name in a minute."

"Who am I?"

"Those old scenes were so vividly impressed upon my brain and heart that I cannot forget them—yes, you are the man who held second officer's berth, and became known on account of your red work in action as Red Ralph Rogers."

"You have a good eye and memory, Master Clifford; but to my price?"

"Name it."

"Five thousand."

"I will not give you half as many hundred."

"You had better do so."

"I will give you two hundred dollars to keep quiet, no more."

"Then I will have to let the good people of M— know that your mother and sister—"

"Stop just there, Red Ralph Rogers, for I will arrest you as a pirate officer, not a boy when you served under the black flag, and who has never been pardoned.

"Yes, I can have you hanged at the yard-arm of the first vessel-of-war that enters at this port."

Red Ralph's face became white as a corpse, and he felt that he was fairly caught.

It was not often that he entrapped himself, but he had done so this time, and he was only anxious to retreat from his position.

So he said:

"Master Clifford, I am no more the man to betray you and those you love, than are you the one to arrest and hang an old comrade on a pirate deck.

"I am driven against the wall, as it were, and I thought that out of your riches you could spare

me considerable to make me comfortable; but never mind, I will not ask it of you now, and you won't wish to see me die at the yard-arm."

"No, but I will not be driven, Ralph Rogers, so if you care to take a couple of hundred dollars and keep your knowledge to yourself, well and good, you shall have the money at once."

"If you do not, or if I find you have broken faith, then I shall hang you as certain as you now stand before me."

"What will you do, for it rests with you to say?"

"I'll take the money, Master Clifford."

Taking from his pocket a roll of bills, the ex-Buccaneer Midshipman counted out the sum he had named and handed it over to Red Ralph, who took it, thanked the young sailor, and getting into his skiff rowed homeward, cursing with every stroke of the oars, for he had been over-matched, and his visions of wealth from the Buccaneer Midshipman had faded away in a few minutes.

"I must tell that fool, Kenton Carr, that I was mistaken, that the resemblance was startling, but that he was not the Buccaneer Middy."

"If I do not, he may play some game for gold, and it will get me hanged."

"If I do not disturb the Middy, he will not trouble me, but I saw in his face to beware if I do."

"I guess I'll keep on the safe side, and stick to smuggling to make money by."

"I wonder if he told me the truth about the treasure being lost on the island, and that he had even forgotten how to find the place?"

"I guess he does not remember, for he was very young then; yet, what a boy, yes, and what a man."

"He is likely to be heard of one of these days as more than the Buccaneer Midshipman," and thus musing, Red Ralph rowed on homeward, angry with, yet not without admiration for the man he had attempted to blackmail.

CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

In his surmise that the young sailor, Clifford Sweegan, would one day be heard of as something else than the Buccaneer Midshipman, Red Ralph Rogers was perfectly correct, for whether the pirate treasure of the Red Scorpion had been left on the island, or brought away, certain it is that there was a vessel fitted out and armed at the expense of the Sorceress, and it put to sea flying the Stars and Stripes, as an American privateer.

The commander of this craft was known in the naval official lists as "Midshipman Clifford Sweegan," but upon his own deck he was called Captain Sweegan, and it was not very long before his schooner made a name for herself and her commander, in fighting the battles of his country.

At home remained the Sorceress and Kate. They were wont to read the accounts of the gallant doings of the young commander and it made their hearts rejoice, for they were more than proud of his splendid career.

And up at Harborage Hall the old commodore was also deeply interested in the young sailor, and used to have Ethel read all that the papers said of him and his victorious cruising.

Nor was Ethel at all backward in desiring the same information, for when Clifford sailed on an armed deck, he carried her heart with him! but he left his, in return, in the keeping of beautiful Ethel, so that he had an incentive to win a name which she had promised him she would one day wear.

As for the profligate, Kenton Carr, he played his last card to win his uncle's favor by going to sea in command of a well-armed and manned privateer, and Red Ralph Rogers went along as his first officer; but somehow, fortune did not smile upon him, for he captured few prizes and one day his vessel was sunk by a frigate flying British colors, it was said, and no one ever heard of that scrapegrace of the sea again.

Clifford returned to port after the war, his name made famous by his deeds, and Ethel Carr was proud to become his bride; but ere she did become his wife, the gallant sailor told her the story of his life, of the deep sorrow his mother had borne for long years, and that it had embittered her life such a degree that she had been glad to have people fear and avoid her, and was willing to be called a sorceress, not even caring when spoken of as the Witch of Overlook Cliff.

Nor did he fail to tell her, also, that he, branded as a pirate's son, had once been known as The Buccaneer Midshipman of the Red Scorpion.

THE END.

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